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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

JOHN MAHON — THE GREATER LONDON ELECTIONS

DENNIS GOODWIN — SHOP STEWARDS—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A. L. MORTON — SHAKESPEARE IN A CHANGING WORLD

DISCUSSION:

ALAN BUSH — WHAT DOES MUSIC EXPRESS? A REPLY

DAVID MERCER — WHAT IS TELEVISION?

HUGO RATHBONE — PROBLEMS OF IMPERIALISM

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Marxism Today

Vol. 8 No. 4

CONTENTS

		page
	Editorial Comments	97
John MAHON	**The Greater London Elections**	102
Dennis GOODWIN	**Shop Stewards—Past, Present and Future**	109
A. L. MORTON	**Shakespeare in a Changing World**	115
DISCUSSION:		
Alan BUSH	**What Does Music Express? A Reply to Discussion**	121
David MERCER	**What is Television?**	123
Hugo RATHBONE	**Problems of Imperialism** ...	126

AMONG ARTICLES IN MAY AND FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Jack WODDIS	**The Soviet Union and National Liberation**
Margaret HUNTER	**Working Women**
Max EGELNICK	**White Collar Workers**
Martin MILLIGAN	**Marxism and Morality**
Sam AARONOVITCH	**Sociology, Class and Power**
Nina HIBBIN	**New Trends in British Film-Making**
Jean FELDMAR & Jane WINTER	**The Quest for Human Happiness**
Brian KIRMAN	**Modern Trends in Psychology**
Marian RAMELSON	**Fight Against the Contagious Diseases Act: 1864-66**

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Editorial Comments

IN February 1963 the British capitalist economy reached its lowest point in the last decade. There were 932,946 unemployed in the United Kingdom. It was only last July that it began recovering, and now Sir Alec Douglas Home, or whoever briefs him, is shouting that Britain is in the greatest boom ever—another "economic miracle". True a very short-lived miracle for already a chorus of "experts" are declaring that this six months old boom is developing too fast, the economy is being "overheated" and "overloaded", and the Chancellor must do something to damp it down.

Perhaps the gentlemen who brief the Prime Minister will tell him what to say if he is asked the question: "Why is it always necessary to damp down a boom in capitalist Britain after it has lasted a brief six months? Why cannot it go on for say two years as in other capitalist economies?"

We are told by the "experts" that British capitalism, in view of the boom, is importing more industrial raw materials and that at the moment it is buying more than it is selling, that the balance of payments is tipping against it.

True enough, but this applies *to all* countries in a boom and not merely to Britain. The others however have had in recent years ample gold and dollar reserves and have drawn upon them to tide them over a period of temporary difficulties. Why cannot British capitalism do the same?

Shrinking Reserves

The answer appears to be that the gold and dollar reserves of Britain—the second greatest trading nation in the capitalist world are much too small for this purpose. In the last four years the reserves of France, West Germany and Italy have grown. In Britain they have fallen steadily. Here are the reserves in the last quarter of 1963, compared with those of the first quarter in 1960: France £1,600 million (1960=£663 million); West Germany £2,565 million (1960=£1,670 million); Italy £1,091 million (1960=£1,012 million); United Kingdom £948 million (1960=£997 million). The reserves of the United Kingdom have shrunk. Those of its main European rivals have grown.

So if West Germany runs into temporary balance of payments difficulties, it can draw on its reserves and ride it out until the situation changes. Britain with its tiny reserves cannot do so. This year it proposes to borrow from foreign banks to help it out.

Why are Britain's reserves so small? A major reason is that Britain is incurring an expenditure of £250 million per annum in maintaining its troops overseas. (It will probably be more in 1964 on account of troop movements in Malaysia, Cyprus, and East Africa.) No such expenditure is incurred by any European capitalist state. Yet it is usual for "experts" to burble on about balance of payment difficulties without mentioning this drain on the British economy which prevents the building of the reserves.

Before the Budget

This is the period of the year (just before the Budget), when the "experts" are let out of their cages to blind us with economic science. Occasionally they accidentally drop a home truth. This they have been doing this year in relation to British and European wages.

It has been one of the brazen lies of the last few years that British wages have been advancing faster than European wages, and so British costs have been rising faster than European costs, which has been held to explain why British exports have been rising more slowly than those of most European countries. Recently, however, it is becoming clear that British wages have been doing no such thing, though the lie continued to be spread by the Government and the employers.

Here is the London and Cambridge Economic Bulletin for March 1964 asserting that British exports may do better in 1964, because continental wages are rising faster than British.

> "Our exports stand to gain from the growth in the real national income of many countries, *which has on average been proceeding at a more rapid pace than seen in the United Kingdom during the last decade.*" (p. XVII. Italics ours.)

Lest we overlook that remark we are told on another page that there is a

> "likelihood that we shall maintain our percentage share in this growing market, instead of seeing it fall in the way which has become so familiar, *thanks largely to wage and price increases by our competitors.*" (page V).

Rubbing it in still further the Bulletin on yet another page gives the percentage increases in British male earnings in manufacturing per annum

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from 1960 onwards, as follows: October 1960 they were 6 per cent; October 1961 4.7; October 1962 3.4; October 1963 3.7—in short in the last three years they were rising about ½ per cent per year faster than the cost of living.

"*The Times*" Clanger

Then the *Times Review of Industry and Technology* lets another clanger drop. It publishes a diagram showing the rise in wages and prices in the United Kingdom, West Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and Switzerland in the years 1960-63 inclusive.

When it comes to rises in prices the U.K. is third from the top of the league, exceeded only by France and Italy, Switzerland comes below the U.K., Belgium and West Germany at the bottom. A look at the diagram shows, however, that in all the countries mentioned wages have risen much faster than prices with the exception of Britain. Here are the *Times Review of Industry's* comments on the diagram:

> "Britain comes third in the above inflationary league; prices in Belgium and West Germany have risen less than those in the United Kingdom during the 1960's, in Switzerland by exactly the same amount 12 per cent, and more in France and Italy. *However, wages in Britain have increased far less than in any of the other countries. In money terms they appear to be 14 per cent higher than in the first quarter of 1960 but in real terms the increase is only two per cent.* Wage earners in West Germany have done easily the best. Wages have risen 42 per cent in money terms and 30 per cent in real terms." (Italics ours).

Little of this material, found in periodicals read by economists and business executives has found its way into trade union propaganda. Perhaps the Right-wing leaders feel that the poor showing of British wages in recent years reflects adversely on them as well as the Government. Yes indeed.

Oxbridge Diplomacy

British Marxists have again and again repeated that it is impossible successfully to advance to socialism in Britain *within* the framework of the existing capitalist state. Again and again they have pointed out that the key positions of the present British state are most carefully *selected* from people of the "right" class and educational background, people loyal to monopoly capitalism.

Of all the carefully selected sections of the state none has been more truly blue and blatantly ruling class than the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Services. This has always been so throughout history.

In a recent study of patronage in British Government,[1] the author, Peter Richards, writing on the struggle for the reform of the Civil Service stated:

> "The Foreign Office steadfastly resisted attempts to tamper with its exclusive character. The system of nomination to enter a qualifying examination was retained, although the standard of this test was improved in 1871. . . . Entrance to the Diplomatic Service was not put on a similar basis of limited competition until 1883 and the need to have a private income of £400 p.a. remained until 1919."

Even when public pressure at long last forced a more open form of competitive examination for diplomats, these exams were organised and carried through in such a way that the final selection came almost inevitably from the same narrow ruling class section. It might no longer be possible to nominate *individuals* but the positions were reserved for representatives of the ruling *class*.

This has remained so until this day, and it was one of the most interesting points which emerged from the Report of the Plowden Committee to the Prime Minister at the end of January. In "diplomatic" language the Committee queried whether recruitment to the Service was "sufficiently broadly based":

> "In the past ten years 70 per cent of the successful applicants to the senior branch of the Foreign Service have come from public schools. . . . Between 1952 and 1962, nearly 60 per cent of the successful candidates had been to Oxford and over 35 per cent to Cambridge." (*Times* 28.2.64.)

Ninety-five per cent from Oxbridge does not, indeed, indicate a very "broad base" for recruitment of diplomats, though it does confirm admirably the accuracy of the Marxist view of the state.

It also presents a very great challenge to the Labour movement and a Labour Government.

Trotskyism—a Few Varieties

One of the features of the present political scene is the proliferation of Trotskyist organisations and pamphlets which make their appearance on the bookstalls. (We use the term Trotskyist to describe members of organisations who either publicly or privately would admit to being Trotskyist.) One of the main occupations of these organisations is in fighting amongst themselves.

In 1953 there was a big split in the Trotskyist movement, and, in Britain, Gerry Healey led a group away from the official Fourth International and this subsequently became the Socialist Labour League.

The remaining group which stayed linked with the Fourth International worked in a very different way. Their aim was to operate the instruction of the

[1] Peter G. Richards—*Patronage in British Government* —Allen & Unwin, 1963, p. 55.

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Fourth International to carry out "long drawn out carefully studied and systematic work as a tendency within the Labour Party".

This group has remained secret, has not divulged its members, and has set out to win positions and to recruit potential candidates and councillors.

The Fourth International secret group attack Healey for "sectarian bravado in separating from the Labour Movement". Healey retorts that they have "reduced their cadres to appendages of social democracy".

But it is necessary to remember that, whatever the differences between them, they both have in common an implacable anti-Soviet and anti-Communist policy. While the F.I. group put forward "transitional demands" which could be supported by genuine left Labour forces they do not, in their own journals, attempt to conceal their ultimate objective. They believe that the violent overthrow of "bureaucratic power" (in the socialist countries) is the *sine qua non* for a real socialist blossoming.

This is the grim reality beneath all the cover of policy on immediate issues. We note the attempts being made to win the support of genuine and respected Labour Party figures on the left by a variation of two tactics. Either they seek to win them to join in forming new organisations and publishing new journals, or alternatively they find their way into genuine left organisations and journals in order to carry out whatever work they can. We note, too, the attention they are giving to such journals as *Union Voice*, the newly advertised publication *The Week* and the recent *International Socialist Journal*.

To add to the confusion another group calling itself the *Revolutionary Workers' Party* (*British Section of the Fourth International*) has appeared on the scene, being yet another breakaway on the really lunatic fringe. It must gravely embarrass both the other groups, and it welcomes the prospect of nuclear war as the final means of settling accounts with capitalism.

These splits, feuds, reunifications and so on are the unhealthy features of a dying and rotten organisation, but our experience shows us that it is not necessary for an organisation to have a mass basis to succeed in disruption. What many are needed to build can be undermined, temporarily at least, by a few.

Report on Peace

"The workers' and peasants' government, created by the revolution of October 24-25 and basing itself on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, proposes to all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace."

Such was the opening paragraph of the *Decree on Peace* published immediately following the October Revolution. The draft decree was presented on October 26th (November 8th) 1917 by Lenin to the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in his *Report on Peace*. Lenin foresaw, that henceforth the fight for peace would have to be pursued by the Soviet Government and people simultaneously by direct appeal to the peoples of the world and by negotiation with capitalist governments. "Our appeal must be addressed," he declared, "both to the governments and to the people."

Lenin's historic *Report on Peace* is the first item in a new collection of his speeches and writings of the 1917-1921 period, just published by Lawrence and Wishart.[2] The collection covers problems of home and foreign policy of the young Soviet Republic, and, above all, problems of peaceful coexistence, and some of the most interesting items are Lenin's interviews with American and British newspapers including the *Daily Express* and the *Manchester Guardian*.

The full text is included of Lenin's *Strange and Monstrous*, an article directed against leftists in the Party (particularly in the Moscow Regional Bureau) who opposed the Peace Treaty which the Soviet Government was obliged to make with Austria and Germany. The leftists claimed that Soviet Power was "becoming purely formal", and accused the Central Committee, including Lenin, of being opportunists.

> "Perhaps the authors (of the Resolution of the Moscow Regional Bureau)," wrote Lenin, "believe that the interests of the world revolution forbid making any peace at all with imperialists? . . . A socialist republic surrounded by imperialist powers could not from this point of view, conclude any economic treaties, and could not exist at all, without flying off to the moon."

Polytechnical Education in the U.S.S.R.

Since the passing of the School Reform Law in 1958 in the U.S.S.R. ("on the strengthening of the ties of the school with life"), rapid and important developments have taken place in the Soviet educational system. Among other changes, this law lengthened the course in the general schools from 17 to 18, so enabling all pupils staying on at school beyond the compulsory school age of 15 to do, during their last three years at school, the equivalent of one year's productive work in industry or agriculture.

The Law has also led to a strengthening of polytechnical education throughout the child's school life. This conception, which implies that all

[2] V. I. Lenin—*Report on Peace*, Lawrence & Wishart 290 pp., 3s. 6d.

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children should grasp the basic scientific and technological principles underlying production, as well as becoming familiar with the uses of the main tools used in industry and agriculture, was originally developed by Marx, who saw polytechnical education as the necessary concomitant of the extraordinarily rapid development of technology in modern industry. This required all-round men, highly educated and fit for a variety of labour. Under socialism, said Marx, such an education would become a practical possibility. This conception was developed by Lenin; today it forms the basic principle underlying the Soviet approach to education.

A recent publication under the auspices of U.N.E.S.C.O., *Polytechnical Education in the U.S.S.R.*, is, therefore, very welcome. There are several books on Soviet education by English and American observers. Here, however, is a most systematic and authoritative discussion of educational theory and practice in the U.S.S.R. by a group of leading Soviet educationists. Published as a paper-back and at a very reasonable price (17s. 6d. for over 400 pages) it should obtain a wide circulation.

The book is divided into two parts. The first includes a useful theoretical chapter by M. N. Skatkin on Marxist ideas on polytechnical education. I. S. Kairov (President of the Academy of Educational Sciences) contributes a chapter on the 1958 School Reform (the full Law is printed as an appendix), while a series of chapters deals with the new curricula and syllabuses, methods of presentation of polytechnical education and related subjects. The second part is concerned with the application of polytechnical education to the teaching of different subjects: the sciences, mathematics and technical drawing, history and geography, as well as engineering and manual and technical instruction.

This book will be of the greatest value for all who wish to understand the full significance of the new developments in Soviet education, developments which amount to an educational revolution.

Marxism and Aesthetics

One of the fields of greatest discussion between Marxists in recent years has been that of aesthetics. All sorts of problems have been and are still being hotly contested, including the nature of realism, of modernism, of the relations of basis and superstructure, the specific character of art, of aesthetic experience, etc.

All the more welcome, therefore, was the decision of the Editorial Board of *Recherches Internationales* to publish a special issue on Marxism and Aesthetics.[3] This has now been done—a double issue of 270 pages, concerned not with the history of art, but with Marxist work on *general* problems of aesthetics.

The material chosen is to say the least varied. There is a long study by Mikhail Lifchits, a Soviet art theoretician, on the aesthetic ideas of Marx and Engels. Professor Stefan Morawski, who holds the Chair of Aesthetics at Warsaw University, writes on *Realism as an Artistic Category*, Marcel Bréazu, Professor of Philosophy at the Bucharest Institute of the Arts on the *Objectivity of Artistic Values*, Efim Dobin, a soviet film critic and theoretician on *Prose and Poetry in the Film*.

There is a long study by the late Professor Antonio Banfi (formerly of Genoa and Milan Universities) on *Lessons of Aesthetics*. In fact these "lessons" formed part of a course of lectures given at Pavia University soon after the liberation of Italy from fascism.

Readers of *Marxism Today* will be familiar with the extracts given from *The Necessity of Art* by the Austrian Marxist, Ernst Fischer. They will be glad, too, to know that the number includes, for the first time in French, George Thomson's booklet *Marxism and Poetry* and, also the contributions by Alan Bush and Thomas Russell on *What Does Music Express*?

They will certainly find amongst the most thought-provoking of the contributions the *Prague Speech* made by Aragon in September 1962, when he called for a type of realism in art which should be "open, non-academic, not fixed, capable of evolution, concerned with what is new in life . . . a realism that helps to change the world, a realism that is not there to reassure us, but to awaken us, and sometimes in so doing to upset us".

Personally I found most helpful the introductory essay by André Gisselbrecht which in a few pages, surveys the main contemporary trends, works, achievements and polemics in the international field of Marxist aesthetics.

French Centre of Marxist Study

In Paris, the Centre of Marxist Study and Research[4] has initiated three "Weeks of Marxist Thought", the first in December 1961, the second in March of last year and the third at the beginning of this year—all with great success. The Centre is publishing, in duplicated form, a number of the lectures that were delivered during these discussion-weeks, and also a number of other papers that have been presented from time to time under its auspices. We cannot do more in these columns than indicate a few of the most diverse and rewarding publications.

The second "Week of Marxist Thought" had as one of its themes the question of social classes. Amongst those of the papers now published are one

[3] *Recherches Internationales*, no. 38—*Esthétique*.

[4] *Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes*, 64 Boulevard Auguste-Blanqui, Paris 13*e*.

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by Gildert Mury on *Social Classes in French Agriculture*, and one by Maurice Bouvier-Ajam on the *Middle Strata in France in the Period of State Monopoly Capitalism*. Incidentally, Mury and Bouvier-Ajam have recently published a fascinating two-volume study of the history of classes and the class structure of France.[5] Also arising from this discussion of social classes, the Centre have published a most useful paper by Francis Cohen (Editor of *Recherches Internationales*) on the *Destiny of Social Classes in the U.S.S.R.* He analyses the evolution of social classes in the Soviet Union from 1917 until the present day, the changing relation between classes, and discusses the future complete disappearance of classes in the transition from socialism to communism. Another paper that was read during these discussions, and which is now available, is that of Gilbert Badia on "The Methods and Aims of National Socialism". Badia is the author of a two-volume study which appeared earlier this year under the title of the "History of Contemporary Germany".[6]

In the field of philosophy there are now available studies on Diderot (on his *Neveu de Rameau*) by Roland Desne, on *Morality According to Kant and to Marx* by Guy Besse, and on *The Hegelian Problem* by Roger Garaudy. There is also a lecture by George Thomson on *The Philosophy of Aeschylus* taking up some of the themes of his book *The First Philosophers*.

In the realm of literature there are two interesting studies, one by Guy Besse on Rousseau (*Jean Jaques Rousseau, Solitude and History*) and one by Andre Gisselbrecht on *Thomas Mann and his "Buddenbrooks"*.

In relation to Marxism and psychology, the Centre has published an informative paper (from the first "Week of Marxist Thought") by a gynaecologist, Dr. A. Hersilie on *Scientific Aspects of Pavlovian Physiology applied to Obstetrics*.

The World of Homer

In their most recent number of *Our History*[7] the Historians Group of the Communist Party have turned to a new world—the World of Homer. This may seem to be a strange companion to some of the other recent issues dealing with questions of Chartism, Trade Union developments and other matters of the comparatively recent past. And yet perhaps the world of Homer is not so very remote from our own—the sulking Achilles, the crafty Odysseus, the outraged and impotent Cyclops might well be caricatures of figures from the politics of our own day. We offer no prizes for identification.

British Marxists can regard with pride the contribution they have made in this field and the extent to which the ideas of Marx and Engels have given them a most valuable approach to the critical study of the period. *The World of Homer* is a further valuable contribution in this tradition.

If the Penguin translations of the Iliad and Odyssey were best sellers there should be a big audience for this succinct discussion of several current controversies in Homeric studies. In thirteen quarto duplicated pages, Willetts treats Mycenean Society—the Linear B Script—the Greek Language—Homer—Homer's Similes and the Enjoyment of Homer. Sometimes a paragraph is rather closely packed with specialist knowledge but the whole essay is of great interest to all and opens up new avenues of thought and study.

> "Then felt I like some watcher of the sky
> When a new planet swims into his ken". . . .

It is to be hoped that before very long we shall have from the same pen a longer work giving more background for those of us who need it and a fuller development of the author's thinking on the subjects.

In the meantime our thanks to Ron Willetts for writing such a well balanced summary and to the Historians Group for giving us the opportunity to read it.

[5] Mury & Bouvier-Ajam—*Les Classes Sociales en France*, 2 vols. Editions Sociales, Paris.

[6] Gilbert Badia—*Histoire de l'Allemagne Contemporaine*, Editions Sociales, Paris, 1963.

[7] *The World of Homer* by R. F. Willetts. Our History Pamphlet no. 32 Winter 1963/64. Central Books 1s. 3d.

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The Greater London Elections

John Mahon

POLLING takes place on April 9th, 1964, for the new Greater London Council and on May 7th for thirty-two new London borough councils. These will be the first elections for the new structure of London government laid down in the Act of 1963. Greater London has a population of some 8½ million and an electorate of some 5½ million. It covers 100 Parliamentary constituencies.

The elections are of special political interest because of the size of Greater London and also because the changes made in the structure of London government are the most far-reaching of those now being introduced.

These changes are not simply a rationalisation of the existing machinery. They open up a new phase in the history of London government.

Communist candidates are standing in each of the thirty-two divisions for the Greater London Council and in larger numbers than previously for the new borough councils. On April 9th every elector in the Greater London area will have, for the first time in history, the opportunity to vote Communist.

The essence of the Communist appeal for votes is that the new councils should carry through a new policy, which will meet the social service needs of the people all over Greater London. That for this purpose the councils should use their existing powers to the full, demand further powers from Parliament, and bring the people into political action.

That Communist councillors are essential, along with Labour majorities, if this is to be done, and that the struggle for immediate demands on the social service front can help to develop the alliance of the working class with professional and middle-class people, which is necessary to break the power of monopoly capital and advance to Socialism.

Capitalists and Local Government

The class division in capitalist Britain has given rise to two basically different attitudes to local government.

That of the capitalist class and the Establishment is to limit the functions of local government to the maintenance at public cost, particularly in the towns, of certain minimum conditions essential for industry and society to function. These range from sanitation and streets passable to traffic, some housing and passenger transport for the labour force, to enough education to make possible skilled workers, adequate clerical staffs and direct talent to the channels best suited to the ruling class.

When capitalism was struggling against older social forces to develop modern industry and its own domination, it found that the multiplicity of appointed local boards, for drainage, sanitation, and schools, were usually incapable of doing what was required. Consequently, the modern type of elected local authority was set up in 1888, focusing on the needs of industry and business in the towns and neglecting the impoverished rural areas. Birmingham's municipal enterprise, developed by Joseph Chamberlain, a rising capitalist, was an example of how business men used the local authorities to further their own aims, and firmly to prevent them going further.

In recent years, with complex problems of the extension of industry, growth of population, developments of road transport, suburban spread, and the need to modernise our cities and towns, the capitalist class has been compelled to give local authorities important powers of planning and compulsory purchase of land and property. It has also increasingly to finance their activities, particularly education, from state funds.

A contradiction therefore is inevitable, and becomingly increasingly visible, between the public need for bold and vigorous planning and action by local authorities, the extension of their activity in housing, education and welfare, and the determination of the ruling class to limit their activity to what will benefit big business and private enterprise. Contrast the readiness of the Minister to sanction compulsory purchase of land for road development and his reluctance to allow such acquisition of land needed for Council housing. The local authorities as useful adjuncts of big business is the Tory idea today, as always.

The Progressive Attitude

The working class and progressive attitude, on the other hand, sees the local authorities as an important means of advancing the standard of living and education of the people, curbing at least some of the excesses of landlords and private enterprise, and furthering the struggle for democratic equality of opportunity. Provision of social services at public expense is seen as a good thing in itself, because it helps those sections of the people who suffer most severely from capitalism, and because it is activity not directly motivated by the desire for private profit. In this sense, effective social services help to prepare the way for an important sector of socialist society.

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This difference of approach to local government is reflected in the attitudes of Tories and right-wing Labour leaders on one hand, and Communists, Socialists and progressives on the other. The Tories regard the local authorities as committees to administer the decisions of the state machine, in a manner best suited to local capitalist interests. The right-wing Labour leaders seek to prove that they can administer the state decisions better than the Tories can, and that they can ensure the passivity of the Labour movement.

The democratic and Communist view is that the councils are first of all elected representatives of the people and that, whatever administrative limitations may be placed on their powers to spend public money, this does not alter the fact, but makes it all the more necessary, that they should voice the needs of the people on all issues and that, while operating their existing powers to the full, they should also be a public force demanding increased powers and resources from Parliament.

Today, with the integration of big business and the state, local government is more and more a field of political conflict between irreconcilable interests. The needs of the majority of the people, including the working class, the professional and middle sections, stand in sharp opposition to those of the landlords, property companies and big business, all supported by Tory policy.

Local government is a lucrative field of profit for financiers, councils have to borrow large sums of money and since the Tory victory in 1951, to pay increasingly high interest rates. The total debt of all local authorities is now over £8,000 million, with interest charges of £378 million in 1962. Even Labour councils with a relatively progressive policy are passive victims of this exploitation. For example, the total debt of the LCC on March 31st, 1963, was £383 million, on which £17,591,000 was paid in interest for the year. At 5¾ per cent interest over sixty years the moneylender gets £10,700 on a flat costing £3,000 for land and building.

As a field for high interest loans, local government is likely to become even more significant in the near future. Larger authorities will undertake larger schemes of development and require more money.

The Pattern of Redevelopment

The pattern of the reconstruction schemes now appears as "partnership" between private enterprise and the local authority. A property company or a big contractor prepares a plan for an area large enough to get full advantage from modern technique. The local authority is indispensable because it has the planning and compulsory purchase powers. As profit is the motive, the areas selected tend to be those where public money can be spent in a big way in getting results which can be exploited by private enterprise, that is city and suburban office and shopping centres, main road development and traffic bottlenecks, and high price housing areas.

Among many such schemes, two London examples may be given. The Labour L.C.C. and Great Portland Estates Ltd. will jointly develop a junction site at City Road and Old Street, E.C.1. The project includes a sixteen-storey office block, an eight-storey commercial building, a discount store and 359 flats, some in a twenty-storey tower. The Tory Brentford and Chiswick Borough Council has asked Samuel Properties Ltd. to plan development of at least 250 and perhaps up to 400 acres, mainly land publicly owned, by the railways, Gas Board and the Council itself. The area is enough to rehouse the 2,000 families on the waiting list, 700 more to be displaced by demolition, with a school, shops, community centre and public gardens by the riverside. Samuel Properties may be thinking of all this, or they may have in mind that luxury homes in this area sell at around £17,000.

The need for such schemes cannot be disputed. Huge areas of our towns, monuments to capitalist greed for profit and indifference to the wellbeing of the people, are a menace to health and a disgrace to the nation.

Contradictions of Development

But what is to be the role of the local authorities?

Are they to use their powers and spend the people's money primarily to pay lavish compensation to land and property owners, huge profits to building contractors, high interest rates to money-lenders? How much of the resulting construction is going to house the people, at reasonable rents? How much is going into business building, on long-term leases at insignificant rents?

That is no doubt the kind of "partnership" the Tories have in mind, the partnership of Red Riding Hood and the wolf. Since the Labour leadership is out to prove itself helpful to big business in other fields, there is no reason to doubt its willingness in this one.

The alternative is for the local authority to itself plan and control the reconstruction and to ensure that the people's needs are met, that areas of obsolescent housing are also redeveloped, that more people are housed than are displaced, that office building is conditional on location of site, that a proportion of all big blocks is devoted to homes, that housing means homes to let, and that schools, community centres, halls, youth facilities and other public amenities are included. They should retain public ownership of the whole construction, and business firms should pay proper rents.

The Greater London of today presents in acute

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form all the contradictions of capitalist town development.

The setting up of the London County Council in 1889, and the Metropolitan Borough Councils in 1899, swept away earlier forms of local authorities because London had so grown in size, population and complexity that the new structure was essential. The County of London then formed had a community of interest in the sphere of local government. Since then, of course, change has continued, and has greatly accelerated in the last two decades.

Some of the most important trends may be noted, since they have relevance to the problems of London government.

Industry has largely moved outward from the old central boroughs. The small workshop has given way to medium and large factories, often grouped in factory estates. Woolwich Dockyard has gone, the Arsenal nearly so, traditional East End trades such as clothing and furnishing are now further afield. New industries, radio and electronics, all kinds of consumer goods, plastic articles, employ many thousands.

The biggest engineering factories today are Fords at Dagenham, E.M.I. at Hayes, Vickers at Weybridge, Standards at Southgate. The big new power stations are at Northfleet, Belvedere and Bradwell, the oil refineries at Shellhaven and Thameshaven. The larger factory estates at Acton, Slough, Basildon, Enfield. All are outside the county of London. The Port tends to move down the river, to the Royal Docks and to Tilbury.

While considerable industry remains in the old county, the main new development today is in the environs and makes for changes in the population and the pattern of transport.

The historical centres, of government at Westminster, of trade and finance in the City, of shopping and amusement in the West End, and of the homes of the rich in Kensington, have all expanded and tend to merge. The whole central area from Fulham to the City, and part of the south bank, shows every sign of becoming a closed preserve of big business, the Establishment and the rich. The main new construction in this area is of office buildings and luxury flats. Rents are so high that working-class people are increasingly unable to reside or small shopkeepers to operate in the area.

The characteristic features of this area are the one-way street, the rush-hour tides, the new office blocks and towers. It is perhaps more than symbolical that Westminster and the City, the areas of government and finance, are now joined by a Fleet Street devoted to the press and that the Houses of Parliament and County Hall, once the dominant architectural features of the Thames-side scene, are now overtopped and outsized by the office towers of Shell and Vickers. St. Paul's remains visible only because it stands on a hill.

The general trend of the residential population is: a marked outward movement from the once teeming boroughs of central London, an increase in Outer London and a considerable increase in South East England, whence many travel daily to work in London. There is an increasing contrast between the residential areas, empty by day and full at night, and the areas of industry and office employment, where the contrary is the case. The population of the County of London has fallen from 4,480,000 in 1921, to 3,195,000 in 1961. In the same period the population in the area of Greater London has increased from 7½ million to 8½ million.

The trend to migrate to London and South East England from other parts of the country continues apace, and there is also considerable immigration from both parts of Ireland, Cyprus and the West Indies, some but by no means all, transient.

The industrial and residential decline in the old county is therefore paralleled by growth in the areas outside it. New centres of industry and of business have grown up in the environs of the county.

These developments, aided by Tory policies, have intensified old problems such as housing and transport to the point of crisis, and have brought new ones, such as fantastic land and house prices and extortionate rents, congestion of streets and the destruction of amenities by traffic invasion of residential streets.

The Housing Contrast

The contrast between the housing conditions of different income groups is greater than ever. At the rich end of the income scale the building of luxury homes, for sale at high prices or letting at high rents goes on in central London, in a number of outer boroughs and in the hinterlands of Kent, Surrey and Sussex, where the fields and woods are now the domain of stockbrokers, directors and executives, the old types of fox and wolf being unable to sustain the competition.

At the lower end, many thousands still live in slums, in sub-standard tenements and in the one-room apartments into which many still substantial older houses are now divided, while an enormous number of back street—and some main street—houses, built in the last decades of the last century are steadily degenerating into slums. Most of them are impossible to modernise. Tory policy has shackled Councils who would like to clear their sites and build. Private developers will only buy them if they can be turned into higher income group housing.

In between, increasing numbers of owner occupiers are appearing, particularly in the outer areas, being

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driven to buy at high prices as the only means of getting a decent place to live in. They are now almost one-third of the residents.

Council building of flats and houses in which the Labour L.C.C. had an outstanding record has been brought almost to a stop by Tory policy, inability to get sites and high prices. The average site cost per dwelling for L.C.C. housing rose from £740 in 1958 to £1,460 in 1963. Such new flats as are built cannot be let at rents the lower-paid can afford, except by overcrowding.

It is difficult to write with restraint about Tory policy on housing. Deliberate, calculated villainy, is a polite characterisation of the Tory Rent Act of 1957 which by decontrol enabled landlords to enforce high rents by eviction. In 1963 4,700 homeless people were in care of the L.C.C. while simultaneously 20,400 dwellings were empty in the same County.

Tory policy has sent up land and house prices to record heights. A plot of land for a school was acquired by compulsory purchase order by the Middlesex County Council in 1958 at an assessed value of £769. Completion was delayed till after the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act in 1959. This Act compelled Councils to pay development values at market prices The plot was re-assessed at over £30,000.

Traffic and Passenger Transport

The relatively new problems of street traffic congestion have developed from several causes. Office buildings have greatly increased in size in already congested centres. Thousands of private cars are used to travel to work, partly because of London Transport's high fares and bad services. More freight travels by lorries and not on rails. Parking facilities and street modernisation are inadequate. Among the consequences are expensive and irritating delays, fumes and noise which menace health, an increase in accidents, and the end of quiet and safety in many residential streets.

The expansion of London and the multiplication of cross journeys would in any case have made necessary a redevelopment of passenger transport. When London Transport was nationalised the base existed for joint working with the nationalised railways to solve the problems. Instead Tory policy has diverted London Transport from its social purpose and failed to modernise it to cope with present and future needs. Tory greed for profit has made London Transport into a milch cow, in the last fifteen years the government took £55 million in fuel tax and the moneylenders got £84 million in interest. Fares were raised nineteen times, the Transport Tribunal made into a farce, while a chronic staff crisis has been produced by the low wage policy, 100,000 workers having left the service.

Today Londoners pay the highest fares ever for the worst services ever. Ten years ago there were, for fewer people than today, 10,803 buses and trolley-buses; now there are 8,442 buses. In the rush hours on some underground and suburban rail lines Londoners travel under conditions which, if animals were involved, would lead immediately to successful prosecutions by the R.S.P.C.A. Rush-hour travel is impossible, except in real risk to health, for those who are unwell or suffer from a disability. The delay in waiting for vehicles, or in traffic jams, the total lack of service at all late in the evening in many parts, the chaos accompanying fog or freeze, or "mechanical faults" pile up an enormous social cost in time and health

What is the impact of the new developments on London government? It is clear that the old boundaries of the local authorities have lost meaning. London has become Greater London. Some 8½ million people have, in spite of considerable local variations, common concern with common problems. The multiplicity of local authorities, the variety of their powers and the areas they cover, do not correspond to today's needs.

What London Needs

Greater London has at a minimum the following problems urgently requiring action by the local authorities.

(1) An overall plan, and power to realise it, for regulating future development in the interests of the people, including control of the siting of industry, where necessary the limitation of office building, the modernisation of roads and transport, the large scale new building of homes, the preservation of the Green Belt and the provision of amenities. Such a plan for Greater London must be part of a wider plan to limit the drift to the south-east of the country.

(2) The immediate development of housing construction inside Greater London and in new towns outside on a scale big enough to end the shortage.

(3) Council control of intensive reconstruction of large areas, providing new homes, schools, and public buildings as well as workplaces, shops, offices and amenities.

(4) Extension over all Greater London of the education services provided by the L.C.C. as a first stage in the rapid provision of enough teachers and buildings to provide comprehensive education for all children from 11 to 16, adequate nursery and primary schools and reduction of all classes to a maximum of thirty.

(5) An efficient and reasonably cheap publicly-owned and controlled passenger transport system for the whole area.

(6) Modern methods of road improvement and

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traffic control including assurance of safety and quiet in residential streets.

(7) The extension of the welfare services with minimum standards and qualified personnel for the whole area.

Even such a tentative assessment of the needs of the people of Greater London makes clear the need for the modernisation of London government in order to cope with them.

London to Greater London

The changes that led from London to Greater London took place during a period in which the productive power of labour has enormously multiplied. New machines, new materials, new processes make possible the technical solution of all the problems facing Greater London.

To thoughtful people the contrast between what is possible and what exists is obvious and painful and has given rise to the conviction that drastic changes, the modernisation of London government, are long overdue.

The Tories seized the opportunity and, in 1957, announced the setting up of a Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London. The Tories' own record and class interests, the terms of reference and the personnel of the Commission were enough to make clear that the primary aim of the Tories was to advance the interests of their own class, to abolish the Labour-controlled L.C.C. and to weaken and destroy its progressive achievements. When Tories want modernisation, its purpose is to perpetuate and increase their profits and privileges at the expense of the people.

There can be no serious dispute that the Labour L.C.C. and the Labour-controlled metropolitan boroughs, made over the years considerable progress in housing education and welfare. The defence of the L.C.C. against the Tory threat was essential, the pity was that Labour did it so half-heartedly.

But the L.C.C. covered only one-third of the population of Greater London. And Tory control from Whitehall had, particularly in the last ten years, hampered and slowed down its progressive activity. It was powerless to halt the evictions which produced thousands of homeless families, while the Tories, with the shameless cynicism of their class, did their best to use the radio and the press to turn public indignation against the L.C.C. for failing to house the homeless instead of against the Tory landlords who had people evicted from their homes.

Labour's defence of the L.C.C. was so conducted as to create the impression that they thought London government was so good that it did not need any changes, except more co-ordination at the top. But to defend the whole position of local government throughout Greater London was to defend the indefensible and to play into Tory hands.

Communist Proposals

In evidence submitted to the Royal Commission in December 1957, the London District Committee of the Communist Party faced the fact that drastic changes in local government powers, practice and structure were necessary to give the people of Greater London the social services they are entitled to in this modern age.

Proposing a two-tier structure, with one Council for the whole of Greater London, a second tier of Councils each covering about 200,000 people, the Communist proposals made clear that the aim of the new structure must be to give the people better services.

Both levels should work together for this purpose, in general the impersonal services being allotted, except for their local application, to the Greater London authority, and the personal services to the local authorities. The Communist view is that powers should be allotted between the two levels in order to ensure the best results for the people, including the participation of the people in the operation of the services, and not on some abstract counter-posing of centralisation to decentralisation.

In housing and education the Communist Party proposed that both authorities should have allotted responsibilities so that big forward strides be taken, a fresh drive made to provide many more homes, and to lift the education service all over Greater London to the level provided by the L.C.C. and go beyond it to comprehensive education for all.

The Communist Party proposed that the Greater London authority should have control over the hospitals, London Transport, the distribution of electricity, gas, water, thus returning to control by elected representatives of the people, services the Tories had previously removed from them. A further proposal was that the police should also be under council control.

In the proposals stress was laid on measures to strengthen democracy in local government. The Greater London authority should be of elected members only with no appointed aldermen, and should number from 120 to 150. Members should be paid for time spent, and their jobs protected by law from dismissal or any penalisation by employers. The wards of the lower councils should be about 2,000 electors to give direct contact between the councillor and the electors. There should be statutory recognition of citizens' committees—of parents, of tenants, in streets and others.

The Communists also pointed out in a warning note:

> "We have our fears that the intention of the present government in constituting this Commission is not directed to improving the London social services, but rather to finding the means of breaking up the great services which, for example, the Labour

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L.C.C. has provided and which the present Government hopes by devolution can be destroyed or rendered less expensive to the ruling class."

Commission Report of 1960

When the Commission's Report appeared in 1960, this warning proved amply justified.

The London District Committee of the Communist Party in its statement of December 4th, 1960, declared that the recommendations of the Commission:

> "under cover of serving an administrative purpose, in fact serve the political aims of the Tories in their desire to get political control of London Government and use it to lower the standards of social services, worsen education, raise rents and generally operate Tory policy."

The Government White Paper and the Bill which followed it late in 1961 went even further than the Commission in order to ensure the defence of big business Tory political interests.

During the passage of the Bill through Parliament, two important concessions were secured by the mass pressure of the people and the Labour Movement. Over 80,000 parents and teachers attended meetings and formed committees to campaign against the clause intended to break up the L.C.C. Education service. The Tories manoeuvred and provided at least the temporary continuation of the service by establishing an Inner London Education Authority as a sub-committee of the Greater London Council.

A second concession allowed the maintenance of the Housing Organisation established by the L.C.C. by providing that the Greater London Council will for a period retain for the present L.C.C. area, concurrent housing powers.

These changes show that concessions which the Tories will not give to argument alone can be won by mass pressure.

The 1963 Act

The new London Government Act received the Royal Assent in July 1963.

It sets up a Greater London Council and thirty-two London Borough Councils, and maintains the Common Council of the City. The new Councils take the place of two County Councils, three County Boroughs, twenty-eight Metropolitan Boroughs, thirty-eight Municipal Boroughs and fifteen Urban District Councils. The new London Boroughs are a new class of borough, they are most-purpose authorities, approximating in their powers to county boroughs.

The powers of the Greater London Council include overall planning and development, metropolitan roads, traffic, main sewerage, refuse disposal, fire and ambulance services and Intelligence (statistical information). It will take over all existing L.C.C. housing and housing land, and be responsible for "overspill" housing, that is housing outside Greater London and have concurrent housing powers in Inner London, the former county of London. Its members elected by the Inner London Boroughs, together with representatives of the Borough Councils and the City Council, will constitute the Inner London Education Authority.

The powers of the London Borough Councils include education (except in Inner London), housing (in Inner London the G.L.C. has concurrent powers), local planning and development, highways, health (except ambulances), welfare, and children's services.

In this Act the Tories have done their best for their class.

They have got rid of the Labour stronghold County of London. They have included in Greater London large Tory areas of Surrey and Kent in an effort to prevent a stable Labour majority on the G.L.C. They have maintained that feudal anomaly the City of London and given its Council increased influence.

The limited powers of the Greater London Council render it unable to tackle the major problems of levelling up and advancing to the level of modern requirements in education, housing, welfare and transport. On these urgent and vital matters there is in fact no all-Greater London Authority. Some of the most valuable services established by the L.C.C. instead of being extended over Greater London will be fragmented between boroughs.

Communist Policy and the Councils

The new boroughs have been so composed that some will be much richer than others. Without an adequate rate equalisation scheme, the poorer boroughs will be at a great disadvantage.

Several factors will tend to make the new councils even less democratic than their predecessors. With much larger electorates, they will be much smaller in numbers. The L.C.C. had 126 elected members, for forty-two parliamentary constituencies; the Middlesex County Council had eighty-eight members for twenty-six constituencies. The new G.L.C. has 100, for 100 parliamentary constituencies. The new boroughs have a maximum of sixty councillors, thirty to 100 less than those displaced. The remoteness of the Town Halls from the people will increase. The new councils will be even less amenable to popular pressure and even more influenced by Whitehall.

Nevertheless, the people have the power to defeat the Tory aims.

The question is not simply whether there is to be a Tory majority or a Labour majority, important though a Labour majority is.

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The basic question is whether the councils are to serve the people or to serve big business and the propertied interests.

To defeat the new plans of the Tories and the monopolies, old Labour methods are not enough. It is necessary to have councillors who will combine the most vigorous expression of the people's needs in the council chambers with leadership of the people in political action outside, councillors who refuse to have their activities limited to administering directives from Whitehall but see their responsibilities in terms of the whole struggle between the people and big business.

The Communist Party has an indispensable contribution to make to this development. Labour majorities without Communists tend to become passive and class collaborationist under right-wing influence and the right-wing often uses disciplinary powers to keep any "rebels" in line. So in fact Labour majorities are found operating the very Tory policies they were elected to oppose. Labour majorities with Communists, and with the popular activity which Communists help to develop, tend to begin to take sides with the people. A London example is the change in the attitude of many Stepney Labour Councillors since Communists were elected.

A check and defeat of the right-wing is essential if the Labour Party is to have a democratic and socialist future. The right-wing makes no challenge to monopoly, it claims to run capitalism better than the monopolists can. The Communist Party works for the breaking of monopoly power and the replacement of capitalism by socialism.

The Communist Party helps the Labour left to challenge and break through the fatal concept that Labour majorities can only do what the council is permitted by Whitehall regulations. The right-wing is now extending this to demand that the local Labour movement activity must be limited to support for the Labour majority. So if a Tory majority raises rents, Labour can oppose, but if a Labour majority raises them, Labour must be silent!

The councils can use their existing powers to do far more for the people than Whitehall wants them to do. They can demand greater powers. They can go to the people for support. The Poplar Council led by George Lansbury was the classic example of a council which refused to be bound and gagged and by its actions inspired such a mass movement that the government of the day had to change the law.

The basic possibility of defeating the whole Tory policy and bringing their plans to nought exists, because the interests of the great majority of the people, the working class and the professional and lower middle classes are opposed to the interests of the propertied interests and big business. Whether this potential can be made into an actual popular anti-Tory majority depends on the political campaign conducted by the working-class parties.

Communist policy expresses the interests of the working class and the lower-middle classes, and can contribute to the alliance of them both that is necessary to defeat the Tories. Labour policy now does not, for it has been modified to make possible collaboration with big business in local as in national affairs.

Needs of the People

Communist policy is based on the needs of the people. It differs from Tory and Labour policy in its demands and also in its aims.

The Communists demand equal educational opportunity for all children from nursery school through comprehensive secondary education to technical college or university. The aim is an educated people, able to enrich and be enriched by modern life. The Tories' aim is to limit full-education to an élite.

In housing the Communist demand is a great extension of Council building to let, with public ownership of rented property and urban land. The aim is to end the housing shortage and to end landlordism. The Tories are the landlords' party.

The Communists want welfare services as of right for all who need them. The Tories want to leave them to charity or make those who receive them pay.

The Communists want public transport to be a social service to meet the people's needs, with a subsidy if necessary. The Tories want it run to pay interest charges.

The Communists want the planned development of Greater London to give the best possible life to the people. The Tories want to plan for the profiteers and speculators.

The Communists tell the people that to get the powers and the money needed to do these things, the power of big business must be curbed and broken. the cold war replaced by peaceful co-existence, Because Labour will do neither, it cannot bring the people into action against Toryism.

Further important differences are that the Communists want to increase the elements of democracy and of public ownership in local government, and to raise the political and socialist consciousness of the people.

The election of Communist councillors strengthens democracy. They act as representatives of the people. They are not intimidated by Whitehall. They speak out in the Council chamber and report back to the public. They take part along with the Communist Party branches in helping the people into action for their demands. The Communists refuse to accept the servile status proposed for the councils by the Tories and want to enliven them by active contact with the people.

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The Communists stand for the equalisation of services all through Greater London. Why should an expectant mother or a handicapped child get less help because they happen to live in a borough where a council is indifferent to their needs, or because that particular borough is not so rich in terms of rateable value and income as another? Communists represent that growing social conscience which refuses to accept inequality of treatment because of circumstances outside the control of the individual concerned.

The financial policy advocated by the Communists will strengthen democracy because it will break the grip of the moneylenders, whose exorbitant usury at present prevents councils doing the job properly except at an exorbitant cost. Low interest loans and the replacement of the rating system by a local income tax, in which the rich pay their full share, is one of the major means of democratising local government.

The Communists stand for an increasing element of public ownership in local government particularly now that reconstruction is beginning. They campaign for rented property to be municipal-owned and for urban land, except that of owner-occupiers, to be nationalised. These measures will be a death blow to landlordism and to the speculative property companies. They will solve the problem of the acquisition of sites and open the way to the solution of the housing problem.

The Communists stand for the principle of direct labour—that is that wherever possible, particularly in building, the councils should get their work done by their own labour force, thus cutting out contractors' profits. A powerful authority like that of Greater London should have its own up-to-date construction plant and make bulk purchase of materials, so that construction work throughout the whole of the Greater London area could be undertaken.

The immediate demands of the Communist candidates will help the people to struggle for better social services, which can be an element in improving the standard of living, particularly for the lower paid, and when wage restraint is government policy. The election of Communist councillors and the joint action of Communist and Labour people is the only way to ensure that the new phase in London government will mean its revival as a democratic force and not its further subordination to the monopoly capitalist state. The Tories and big business are determined to reduce the social services. To defeat them in this field requires, as in others, the mass political action of the people, the unity of the working class and all who stand for social advance.

Shop Stewards— Past, Present and Future

Dennis Goodwin

I. Introduction

THE shop stewards represent one of the most outstanding achievements of British trade unionism. Democratic in form and content, the shop stewards have largely made possible the building of trade union membership and organisation on the scale it exists today. Their work has been indispensable in the defence of wages and working conditions and the shortening of hours of labour. They have helped achieve important political gains for the working class.

Today, they represent an essential bulwark for workers in every industry against monopoly's plans to increase exploitation and to weaken the power of the unions.

Because they are the elected representatives at the point of production of the most highly organised sections of industrial workers their role in the future can be even greater than in the past or present.

Examination of the position, problems and perspective of shop stewards, the digesting of experiences and formulation for discussion of the lessons arising, is essential to all who recognise the organised workers in industry as the decisive force for basic social change in Britain today.

The root of the influence and strength of the shop stewards lies in their democratic foundation, their direct links with the workers on the shop floor, from whom they derive the strength they exercise and who, in turn, are able to directly control their elected shop steward or representative.

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Democracy

It is difficult to conceive of a more democratic form of leadership. The steward is elected by the members he represents. Once elected, he carries out his functions in the very midst of his "electors". Five days a week, eight or more hours a day, they are able to see how he conducts himself as steward. The results of his work, good, bad or indifferent, are there for all to see. He is subject to recall or replacement at any time. Usually, he will have to—and want to—report progress on important items to shop meetings of workers he represents, and will have an elected shop committee to help in the work.

Coming together at enterprise, combine, district or sometimes national level with fellow stewards from his own and other industries, he participates in and gains from the pooling and interchange of experiences.

Compelled to be knowledgeable and often expert in many aspects of production techniques in order to protect his members' interests, he can rapidly learn monopoly's methods and tactics. Often he gets a deep understanding of the process of exploitation.

Of course the picture is not all positive, as will be shown later. But the *most important feature* of the shop stewards today is positive. That is why monopoly capital and the right wing leaders in the Labour Movement do so much to try and confine, limit, impede, the shop stewards' work, and to develop it into "safe channels".

Out of this struggle there have emerged two trends in the trade union movement on what the role and future of the shop stewards should be. The conflict between the trends has expressed itself in many major factory struggles (Fords, B.L.S.P., Edwards High Vacuum, Davy United, the struggles of the building workers, etc.). Upon its outcome a great deal depends.

To give serious consideration to this question a brief if inadequate summary of the development of the shop stewards in Britain is needed.

II. The Growth of the Shop Stewards

(a) Up to 1918

An adequate history of the shop stewards in Britain is still lacking. The most valuable material is to be found in William Gallacher's *Revolt on the Clyde*, Wal Hannington's *Rights of the Engineers*, the Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism*, and useful information on the present-day position in *Trade Union Officers* by Clegg, Killick and Adams, and in *Trade Union Government in Great Britain* by B. C. Roberts.

The shop stewards made their first great step forward during the First World War 1914-18. Prior to 1914, stewards existed in some numbers but more confined to certain of the skilled trades. Their functions were important but limited. They inspected cards, recruited to the unions; watched for encroachments on the trade by other sections of labour; reported to union branch or district committees on workshop matters requiring official attention. They were not recognised by the employers, nor did they have negotiating rights at job level.

With the rapid technological progress from 1910 onwards, new machines, fresh developments in mass production, assembly lines, etc., day to day problems in the factories mounted. The existing cumbrous trade union machinery proved slow to deal with them. In April 1914 after four years of the "great unrest" in industry, the *York Memorandum* was concluded in the engineering industry. It did not recognise shop stewards but did include provison for:

> "deputations of workmen, who may be accompanied by their Organising District Delegate"

to meet the employers to discuss questions of wages and working conditions. Despite the other extremely negative features of the *York Memorandum*, which persist to the present day, the agreement undoubtedly helped to enhance the role of stewards.

At the outbreak of war the official unions became party to an industrial truce, no strikes or industrial actions were to be conducted. But in the great munitions factories every kind of problem of wages, hours, working conditions, developed. Rapidly the shop stewards became negotiators and largely superseded at job level the official trade union machinery.

In 1917 the engineering employers recognised the shop stewards as an official part of the negotiating committees, recognised the workers' right to elect their stewards, but expressly stated that this was subject to full control of stewards by their unions and that no agreements could be negotiated

> "inconsistent with agreements between the employers' federations and the unions".

In this period, too, some stewards developed a consistent political line especially on the Clyde under William Gallacher's leadership. The great struggles are described in *Revolt on the Clyde*—for rent control, for peace, for workers' control of industry. The most advanced sections of the shop stewards were to pursue this course and helped to form the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920.

(b) 1918-1945

With the return of peace-time conditions great efforts were made by the employers and right wing

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trade union leaders to "deal with" the problem of the shop stewards and to limit their powers.

In the majority of unions the shop stewards were established as part of the normal machinery of trade union organisation. Much as the employers would have liked to "put back the clock" such a task was beyond them. The aim was set and pursued of trying to make the shop stewards "safe" and where possible to turn shop stewards' organisation to the advantage of the employers.

In December 1919 a new agreement in engineering recognised the principle of works committees—joint workers/management bodies with the stewards recognised as workers' representatives. Stewards were entitled to claim facilities in the factory for carrying out their duties. Stewards on works committees had the right to visit all parts of the factory to deal with problems requiring their attention as stewards. (Shades of Fords 1963!)

The essence of the employers' and right wing strategy was to give some official status and recognition to the stewards who, in return, were expected to surrender many of their previous "unofficial" powers. The stewards were to have some official negotiating powers, but these were to derive from the unions and be subject to union control. The employers' federations again and again stressed the necessity of this as a condition for their recognition.

But this attempt to keep the stewards "safe" had two sides. True, right wing led unions were able to wield the weapons of discipline against stewards who got "out of step". But, equally, progressive unions were able to back up the work of the stewards with the support and strength of the union machinery. Equally the stewards became a key force in building the unions.

In Hannington's words the stewards became

> ". . . the N.C.O.s of the workers' army. Their leadership determined the standard of morale and the spirit of trade unionism among the workpeople in their factory".

In the trade union field their role developed very much along present-day lines. They recruited to the unions and stimulated trade union interest among the workers. They became a key force in defending and improving wages and working conditions at job level and in supporting national claims, as well as in the settlement of daily grievances. All over the country stewards were ensuring that employers observed all agreements and operated new agreements and awards. The more advanced thinking stewards in the skilled trades led the fight for the conception that 100 per cent trade unionism meant what it said—*all* organised, skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled; women and youth as well as men.

In the General Strike of 1926 it was the shop stewards, alongside the Trades Councils, who were the leading force in bringing into being the Councils of Action, which for nine glorious days showed the power of a united Labour Movement, until the shameful betrayal by the right wing.

The stewards led the fight for production in the anti-Fascist war, and in the political field the majority of stewards were strongly anti-Tory, pro-nationalisation, and played a leading part in rousing the factory workers for the routing of the Tories in 1945.

(c) 1945 Onwards

The pattern of shop stewards organisation as it has grown and changed in the past twenty years again reflects the struggle between the two trends in the Labour Movement and highlights some major problems and lessons.

The principle of shop steward organisation has reached into almost every major industry, and important sections of "white collar" workers, whether it be as shop steward, "Father of the Chapel" (in print), branch or lodge officials negotiating direct with management (in mining) "delegates" (in some sections of shipping), or sometimes with lesser powers as collector stewards, or money stewards in many industries and unions.

There has been no official census of shop stewards but the 1960 T.U.C. report stated that "there are at least 200,000 stewards". This figure is almost certainly an overestimate. The A.E.U. claims 23,523 (W. Carron at 1960 T.U.C.) and the T.G.W.U. over 25,000 (B. C. Roberts *Trade Union Government in Great Britain*).

The Clegg, Killick and Adams survey quotes shop stewards as representing an average of sixty-nine workers per steward and gives an interesting breakdown covering some unions.

Union	*Average No. of members per steward*
A.E.U. (National figures) ..	40
A.E.U. (Survey figures)	78
T.G.W.U. (National figures) ..	50
T.G.W.U. (Survey figures) ..	91
N.U.G.M.W. (Survey)	59
N.U.P.B.P.W.	**86**
A.E.S.D. (now D.A.T.A.) ..	18
A.U.B.T.W.	103
Print (each F.O.C.)	71

Each shop stewards' "convenor" (steward chosen by shop stewards' committees in organised factories as their leading spokesman in negotiations) represented an average of 978 workers, and each "branch negotiator" 1,172.

Each steward spent, on an average, eleven hours a week on his shop steward's work, six hours in his working time, five hours in his own time. Each convenor spent an average of eighteen hours of his working time and five hours of his own time.

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The survey showed the increasing responsibility on shop stewards for negotiating grievances on the spot, pursuing them through the machinery, organising the membership, ensuring trade union discipline is observed, attending to safety and welfare, and the growing volume of stewards' time and work on every type of ratefixing problem, ensuring that workers' rates and conditions are defended.

One out of every four stewards serves on a higher union committee of one kind or another (although very few unions provide for shop steward representation on such higher bodies). A rather important exception is the A.E.U.

(d) Attacks on the Shop Stewards

The figures show the continued growth of influence of the shop stewards, even though they exclude all consideration of the part they have played in politics. Messrs. Clegg, Killick and Adams also reflect their failure to understand trade union consciousness when they comment:

> "On the face of it the expenditure by stewards of much of their own time on Union business is surprising."

With the growth of the shop stewards the attempt by the employers to weaken them have grown, and the right wing leaders' attempts to keep them "safe" for class collaboration have extended. A sharper battle has developed between the two trends and is likely to intensify. This is so, as monopoly capital drives forward its attempts to intensify exploitation, impose an "incomes policy" (i.e. wage restraint leading towards wage freeze and wage cuts), weaken the power of the unions to resist (N.B. the Rookes-Barnard judgment and the employer's attempt to imprison the General Secretary of the W.L.T.B.U. for contempt of court), introduce new legislation restricting the unions.

It is becoming clear that those aims of the big employers more and more run up against the resistance of the workers at job level, led and helped forward by the shop stewards. It is job pressure which on the one hand encourages or compels (as the case may be) union leaderships to press for wages and hours improvements in excess of the "guiding light". It is 100 per cent workshop organisation with strong shop stewards that is able to secure local agreements in advance—often far in advance—of nationally negotiated rates and conditions, even though based on those national agreements.

The right wing trade union leaders, dedicated to class collaboration, with no perspective other than to "make capitalism work" seek to use the weapon of union discipline and powers to keep the stewards quiet.

One right wing trade union leader describes the militant stewards as "werewolves, foaming at the mouth" at his union's national conference. Trade union strength is withheld to defend the victimised stewards at Fords and elsewhere. Strikes are declared unofficial. At the same time a widespread and concerted campaign has been developed to transform the stewards into an adjunct of management, "greasing the wheels of industry", and to "educate" them sometimes in the employers' time with tutors and syllabuses designed to spread the idea of worker and employer as "one happy family".

A T.U.C. circular to all unions in 1963 on the question of classes for shop stewards in the employers' time (i.e. with payment of time lost from production) specifically laid down that the employers would "naturally" have to approve the syllabus.

The right wing leaders have been particularly sensitive to all attempts of stewards from different factories to come together as "combines" i.e. covering all factories under a single ownership or in national conferences or on a regional basis. Readers will be familiar with the attempts over the years to exorcise with bell, book and candle the militant stewards (or their equivalent) in engineering, the power industry, building, the docks; the attempts to withdraw, and actual withdrawal of shop stewards' credentials, and in some cases expulsions.

The 1960 T.U.C. report on shop stewards made the central feature of its attack precisely what it called "joint arrangements between stewards", regardless of the factors that had given rise to the need for such arrangements (mergers, growth of monopoly, new processes, etc.) and regardless of the failure of most unions to make such "arrangements" officially.

Incidentally, the attempts of the General Council of the T.U.C. in 1960 show how far the knights have gone in contrast to the decisions of an earlier T.U.C., in 1925 at Scarborough, which declared that:

> "Congress considers that strong, well-organised Shop Committees are indispensable weapons in the struggle to force the Capitalists to relinquish their grip on industry, and therefore pledges itself to do all in its power to develop and strengthen workshop organisation."

(e) A Balance Sheet

1964 finds the shop stewards more numerous and vital than at any time in their history; taken as a whole a massive obstacle to the plans of monopoly capital. The democratic form and content of shop stewards' organisation has been retained and remains the basis of its strength. Nevertheless, the picture is not uniform. The two trends in the labour movement find their reflection among the shop stewards too. Stewards who see their task as militant leadership of workers on the job exist alongside those who see it as part of management with increased productivity as the main goal.

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For the workers on the job, the extension and strengthening of the shop stewards has usually meant a bigger pay packet and better working conditions. In periods when possibilities have been greatest to make gains at the employers' expense (e.g. full employment periods) these gains have often been substantial. For the unions, wherever the shop stewards have been strong, trade union membership has grown and the points of 100 per cent organisation multiplied.

These achievements have often helped tens of thousands of workers to overcome, at job level, the harmful effects of bad agreements negotiated by right wing leaders at national level.

It is to no small extent this achievement which has blocked the way to monopoly capital getting its way, and which has prompted such angry references in recent times as that of Mr. Charles Garland, President of the National Union of Manufacturers, in 1958—"Shop stewards are an excrescence on the trade unions which will destroy them if the evil is not controlled . . .".

But negative features have emerged as well.

The democracy of the factory floor, the workshop and the job has often only been exercised within the confines of the job. The necessity for that democratic strength being fully exercised in shaping union policy as a whole, and in determining the character of union leadership has not been sufficiently recognised nor carried into effect to anything like the same extent. The trade union branch room as the decisive place for influencing union policy and leadership has all too often been left to the faithful few.

The figures quoted in the C.K.A. survey of union dues collected by stewards or collectors—76 per cent in the T.G.W.U., 68 per cent in the A.E.U., 74 per cent in the N.U.G.M.W.—show the extent to which members have failed to use their democratic rights in this key field of trade union life.

The very success of the shop stewards at job level on wages, conditions, etc., has often given rise to the idea that attendance at the branch is no longer necessary. Yet every shop steward knows what enormous advances would be possible if the necessary changes in national trade union policy and leadership were achieved.

Here indeed is a key problem for the militant shop stewards to get to grips with.

A further big problem emerging from the fifty years experience is the need greatly to extend work on political questions. Important as the role of the stewards has been on such vital questions as the political fight against unemployment, on rents, in General Elections, and on some other political issues, it cannot be said, with certain honourable exceptions, that the campaigning political spirit of the Clyde stewards of the 1914-18 period has been maintained.

The desperately dangerous days of the Cuba crisis underlined how much still needs to be done for the shop stewards to be won for actively rousing trade unionists for peaceful co-existence. It is often forgotten that when brother (or sister) industrial worker clocks off and goes home he and she become Mr. and Mrs. Elector, affected by the housing crisis, the problems of their children's education, of local transport and all the rest.

How much life and the spirit of workshop struggle and democracy would it bring into Parliament and the Council chambers if hundreds more shop stewards were in them!

III. The Future

This brief and very inadequate survey of the past and present does raise some of the big problems for the future of the shop stewards.

Outstanding in the writer's opinion, are:

(*a*) The further strengthening of the shop stewards,
(*b*) Closer integration with the unions,
(*c*) A wider participation in the Labour Movement struggle as a whole.

These are necessary because of the sharpening struggle, the new developments in technology, particularly automation, and the increased opportunity to bring about basic socialist change with the transformation that would bring to the workers' life.

(a) Further Strengthening of the Shop Stewards

A considerable quantitative increase is needed. Even if the doubtful T.U.C. figure of 200,000 stewards is accepted it means one steward to about forty-five trade unionists. I think most stewards would argue that one to thirty is the maximum figure for effective stewardship. Then, as inroads are made into organising the unorganised, so the need will arise for many new stewards. Any union official can tell you how pressing a problem this can be.

In a period of rapid changes in techniques and productive processes problems in the workshop, the pit, the site, and depot are bound to increase. Sufficient stewards are needed to attend to them. Among seamen the right to elect shop (ship) stewards has still to be won.

More stewards will not fall from heaven. The unions have to do everything in their power to encourage and help workers to come forward. Above all they must give stewards the full protection of trade union strength and put an end to the shameful victimisation that has taken place such as in Fords, on the big building sites and elsewhere. It is no way to encourage new stewards to come forward, if existing ones are left to "go down the road".

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Protection of stewards is also essential to establish equality of rights in negotiations.

J. R. Campbell in his Communist Party pamphlet *New Days, New Ways* succinctly sums it up in his polemic against Jack of Fords:

> "Mr. Jack says shop stewards should not have special protection. On the contrary, we insist that shop stewards *must* have special protection. There can be no genuine negotiation, if the negotiator on the side of the management, or his pals, have power to dismiss the negotiator on the side of the workers. The inviolability of the shop stewards is one of our aims."

Of course this means "encroachment on managerial function", but that is what working class needs require.

A further need is to extend joint organisation of shop stewards, and this again is made more urgent by the rapid growth of new problems arising from technological change. Joint shop stewards committees are essential to negotiate on all plant issues. So too, as monopoly's growth means many plants under single ownership, combine committees of stewards drawn from the various units of the combine become essential.

(b) Closer integration with the unions

Experience has shown that strong, militant, forward looking, trade unionism cannot exist without a powerful, growing, shop stewards organisation, the indispensable link with, and organisers of, the members at job level.

Equally every tendency to see shop stewards organisation as an alternative to the unions has led to serious setbacks for the workers.

Shop stewards could well take warning from the view expressed by George Woodcock in *Reynolds News* on May 31st, 1959, when the then Assistant Secretary of the T.U.C. was quoted as saying "If I were an active trade unionist again [*sic.*] you wouldn't see me anywhere near a branch".

Does the future not lie in a much closer integration of the shop stewards with the machinery of the trades unions? Would this not strengthen the hand of every union, rally support behind it, make major improvements in trade union democracy and unify members and leaderships for democratically agreed policies?

Is it not time for shop stewards to be directly and adequately represented on leading trade union committees, at least at District and Area level? The A.E.U. rules provide for one stewards' representative on each district committee to every 5,000 members. This is inadequate enough but even so is exceptional in trade union practice today. More frequent district and area gatherings of shop stewards are needed, and the unions must provide facilities for conferences of shop stewards from all unions in specific industries or covered by the same agreements.

Above all, it is only when the voice of the shop floor becomes the strongest voice in the union branches that the necessary integration will have been fully won.

(c) Wider participation in the struggle of the Labour Movement

In these days of monopoly capital control of the State when hours, jobs, conditions are all highly political questions, political decisions are used to try and increase exploitation and weaken trade union strength.

With the prospect of a Labour Government arising out of the imminent General Election, monopoly pressure will become even more intense to try and ensure that the Labour Government protects monopoly interests at the workers' expense, as was done in 1945-50, leading to Tory come-back and twelve years of Tory rule. Yet this is not what trade unionists want. They want to see a Labour Government succeed, to see right wing policies replaced by socialist policies.

The shop stewards, precisely because of their numbers, their direct links with, and influence among, nine million trade unionists, can play a major part in bringing this about. Nor should they be deterred from doing so by Press or TV attacks.

Len Miseldene, respected President of the A.E.U. London South District, in an article in the A.E.U. Journal, expressed it very well:

> "Trade Unionists generally are not unfamiliar with the activities of the Press, Radio and Television, in assessing the Shop Steward's character and the outlook varies with each set of industrial or political circumstances. In times of war or national stress when production of all kinds is imperative to the national well-being, the propagandist sees the Trade Unionist as a steady, clear thinking, hard working, conscientious and upright individual who deserves the best the nation can offer. But should the Trade Union demand and support some radical change in their environment, whether it be a plan for socialism, a bigger share in the national wealth, the right to work and live in peace without the continued threat of war, then overnight the image changes, the member then becomes reckless, muddle-headed, shifty, disruptive, dictatorial, anti-British and an agitator against the Union and the British way of life."

Yes indeed—a plan for Socialism, a bigger share of the national wealth, the right to work and live in peace—these are very real questions for trade unionists, and every shop steward has the right to place them before his members for consideration. The more these questions, and the big social problems of the day too, are debated, the more activity is developed around them, the more members will

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see the need to go to the branch room, to participate in political life, to join with others in striving for a better order of society.

IV. Socialism and the Shop Stewards

It is appropriate in this journal to raise the question of the significance of the shop stewards in opening the way to the achievement of Socialism, and also in its construction.

The isolation and defeat of monopoly capital will usher in an era of great opportunity for the British people but also one of complex and tremendous problems.

In such a period the organised workers in industry will have a major part to play. Problems of production, the running of the country, the functioning of the State, resistance to all attempts by reaction to turn back the clock, will all arise. The role of the unions in protecting members' interests will remain a major and basic function.

The shop stewards, one of the most positive products of British trade union struggle and history, provides an indispensable and powerful form of working class democracy in action. Their services to the working class and the people in the years ahead will far outstrip even their invaluable achievements of years past.

To study the lessons of their work and history, to help to point the way ahead, is an essential to all who recognise in the British trade union movement a great force for social change once it is freed of the grip of right wing leaders and ideas.

Shakespeare in a Changing World

A. L. Morton

THE fourth centenary of the birth of Shakespeare sets us looking back not only at Shakespeare and his work but at four centuries of Shakespearean criticism and interpretation. Just midway between 1564 and 1964 Dr. Johnson summed up the best judgement of the eighteenth century:

> He has long outlived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit. . . . The effects of favour and competition are at an end; the tradition of his friendships and his enmities has perished; his works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with invectives; they can neither indulge vanity, nor gratify malignity; but are read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are, therefore, praised only as pleasure is obtained; yet, thus unassisted by interest or passion, they have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honours at every transmission. . . .
>
> Shakespeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life.

Johnson and his contemporaries criticised Shakespeare from an assured conviction that their world had attained a pinnacle of civilisation from which ruder ages and authors could be finally assessed. Their successors, the romantics, seeing themselves rather as travellers into an unknown future, looked at Shakespeare with very different eyes, and in Germany especially a whole critical school began to seize upon him as a weapon or an ally with which to destroy the domination of the classical culture derived from France. Shakespeare began to seem to them, as it were, a contemporary and a compatriot and his discovery a part of the great revolutionary release of human activity with which romanticism is associated, and so he was to be judged rather by his own standards than by those of a pre-established and absolute set of rules.

Yet this advance was accompanied by a growing tendency to look at Shakespeare's work in a purely individual, impressionistic way, which made the critic more interested in describing his own response to Shakespeare than in the objective content of the plays themselves. One result was a one-sided concentration on character analysis, leading to the views embodied in such phrases as "character is fate" or "the tragic flaw". As the nineteenth century went on, more and more critics began to discover in Shakespeare more and more reflections of more and more aspects of themselves, and this has continued with the kind of result described by T. S. Eliot in a famous passage:

> The last few years have witnessed a number of recrudescences of Shakespeare. There is the fatigued Shakespeare, a retired Anglo-Indian, presented by Mr. Lytton Strachey; there is the

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> messianic Shakespeare, bringing a new philosophy and a new system of yoga, presented by Mr. Middleton Murry; and there is the ferocious Shakespeare, a furious Samson, presented by Mr. Wyndham Lewis in his recent and most interesting book *The Lion and the Fox.*

Having added that "I do not conceive him as very like either Mr. Strachey, or Mr. Murry, or Mr. Lewis, or myself", Eliot proceeds, with conscious or unconscious irony, to sketch a portrait of Shakespeare very much in his own image. However, we can agree both that there is a great danger in merely subjective estimates of Shakespeare and that it is both inevitable and necessary that every age shall re-interpret him in its own way.

Shakespeare's World and Ours

In the most recent years the volume of Shakespearean criticism has swollen to such an extent that only professional Shakespearean critics can possibly keep abreast of it: how large it is may to some extent be gauged from the number of recent works quoted or referred to in footnotes of *Shakespeare in a Changing World,* a volume of essays edited by Arnold Kettle.[1] The majority of these works are highly specialised studies of particular plays or problems, and, while the addition of one more volume to the flood of books about Shakespeare might seem to need justification, it is perhaps this very wealth of specialised work which makes such a book most necessary. More than ever before we—that is, the ordinary lovers of Shakespeare's plays—need some sort of guide through the critical jungle.

Every age makes its own assessment of Shakespeare. None of them can be final, but each has added something of value. The specific nature of the addition made by this book is perhaps indicated by its title. It interprets Shakespeare in *his* changing world as we see them in our changing world. As Kettle says in his Introduction:

> It is not to claim any superiority of sensibility to recognise that his sixteenth-century world and our twentieth-century one have at least one characteristic deeply in common: the rate and the density of change is, as these things go, exceptionally powerful, so that, whatever conclusions they may draw from the changes, men are unusually conscious of change and its necessities. . . . No one tells us as much as he of the processes of time and all that they involve in pain and wonder. It is upon the tensions of the changing world that he builds his poem-plays.

Shakespeare in a Changing World contains a dozen essays, two-thirds dealing with particular plays, the remainder with more general topics of Shakespearean criticism. Its approach is indicated in Kettle's Introduction:

> Not all the contributors to this volume would describe themselves—at any rate without qualification—as Marxists; though none would wish to deny the relevance of Marxist thinking to his approach. Secondly, those of us who are Marxists would wish emphatically to repudiate any suggestion either that we regard our particular contribution as definitive or that there can properly be any narrow or dogmatic orthodoxy in the sort of enterprise we are engaged in. We do not believe that Marxism is that kind of philosophy or Shakespeare that kind of writer.

If, then, this book is to be regarded as a Marxist interpretation of Shakespeare it can only be in this rather broad sense. And, while the disclaimer of finality is obviously correct and necessary, I think it can be said right away that this book makes a very great advance in our understanding of Shakespeare.

Twenty-seven years ago L. C. Knights in *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* criticised Marxists for being content to repeat Marx's general principles instead of applying them in detail to specific problems of literature. This criticism, while by no means valid even in 1937, was then possible because of the still primitive state of Marxist studies in this field—at any rate in Britain. Today such a criticism could only be made by someone either quite ignorant of the work that has been done or deliberately determined to ignore it. *Shakespeare in a Changing World* would be sufficient even alone to demonstrate this conclusively.

The Tradition of Humanism

It sees Shakespeare as a great poet steeped in the humanism that was the most progressive ideology of his time. But to describe Shakespeare as a humanist would not in itself take us far. We need, first, to consider what humanism implied in the sixteenth century, and, second, to study in detail the attitudes and values we find in the plays and to understand their relation to contemporary humanism and its problems. The first essay in this book, *The Soul of the Age,* by Robert Weimann, a contribution which comes up to the highest standards of the great tradition of German Shakespearean criticism, has some illuminating remarks on these problems:

> If we approach it [humanism] at its greatest level, as seen in *Doctor Faustus* or *Hamlet,* the inadequacy of the customary approach becomes evident: the humanist element in either of the

[1] Arnold Kettle (Editor)—*Shakespeare in a Changing World,* Lawrence & Wishart, 36s.

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> plays (in so far as it is possible to abstract it) can no longer be reduced to its Senecan sources or understood in terms of the older synthesis of Christian faith and classical reason. Once humanism had entered the popular theatre and modified its rigid poetic dogmas, it achieved a new social dimension and a new freedom of the imagination, through which its artistic potentialities were tremendously enriched. . . . It produces the grand rhetoric of Marlowe's "mighty line" and—through this—the towering stature of his heroes; less directly it informs the enhanced capacities for tragic action in Shakespeare and Webster, where human destiny is no longer subject to some inscrutable fate—determined by arbitrary gods or the wheel of fortune—but ultimately conditioned by the deeds, though not the will, of men.

In studies of particular plays the character and implications of Shakespeare's humanism is explored in detail with the most scrupulous regard for what is actually in the plays. Indeed, nothing in the book is more impressive than its avoidance of doubtful generalisations, the reluctance of all the contributors to go one inch beyond what is indisputably in the texts before them. It is the more necessary to stress this because in a review one is so often compelled to quote, or even summarise, conclusions without being able to give the evidence on which they are based.

The result of this close analysis is a clearer understanding not only of Shakespearean humanism in a general sense but of his plays. And indeed, so far as we are concerned, the plays *are* Shakespeare. There is perhaps no great writer of whom we know at once so little and so much—so little in the sense of biographical detail, so much in a deeper sense, because no writer has revealed himself more fully in his work. Shakespeare did not "unlock his heart" only or principally in his Sonnets, indeed, the Sonnets have sometimes seemed to create more difficulties than they resolved by enticing us to ask the wrong kind of question, but in his whole work, above all in the greatest of his plays. Obviously discretion is needed: we do not attribute to Shakespeare every sentiment he puts into the mouth of any of his characters, and certainly no contributor to this book falls into such errors. But if we read the plays carefully, using our feeling for the subtleties of language and our historical sense, we can, I think, arrive with a reasonable certainty at a pretty clear view of Shakespeare's attitude to life and society, we can discover what he valued and what he despised, what he found admirable and what abominable.

Shakespeare in a Changing World is full of fresh insights and illuminations on such matters. Thus, to start with a very simple example, *Coriolanus* had often been treated as evidence of Shakespeare's contempt for the common people. But Kenneth Muir in his essay *Shakespeare and Politics* observes that:

> it is clear from a study of Plutarch that Shakespeare whittled down some of Coriolanus's excuses; that he made him more insolent than Plutarch had done; that he gave the people genuine grievances; that, though they were less courageous in battle than Coriolanus, they resented being treated as mere cannon fodder; that the war was a method of disposing of the surplus population, what Coriolanus shockingly calls "our musty superfluity"; that it is Coriolanus, not they nor the Tribunes, who wishes to overturn the constitution; and that when Rome is besieged they exhibit more genuine patriotism, and much greater objectivity than the patricians. Even the Tribunes, who have been described as "comic and detestable villains", are depicted by Shakespeare as shrewd politicians who are much less unscrupulous than their opponents.

And J. K. Walton demonstrates that the tragedy of Macbeth arises from:

> a struggle within Macbeth's mind between the two opposing views of man, the view of man as an individualist whose primary loyalty is to his own interests, and the view of man as a member of society whose primary loyalty is to the interests of his fellow men.

By cutting himself away from what is truly human in man Macbeth destroys himself, and the deepest tragedy comes from his own realisation that this is so. It is the bitter knowledge that by his acts he has made himself a beast which forms his last link with manhood, and it is because of this that he never entirely loses our sympathy.

Race and Othello

Of exceptional interest is G. M. Matthews' discussion of *Othello*, which, he insists, is not a play about sexual jealousy but about colour and social relationships. In the rich, corrupt and sophisticated society of Venice Othello is an outsider, useful to the ruling aristocracy for his military skill, flattered and favoured up to a point, but still a servant. One of the things that distinguishes Othello in this society is his innocence. He *does* wear his heart upon his sleeve and is conscious, without false modesty, of the greatness of that heart. What he values in human relations is sincerity and loyalty: he gives them and is simple enough to expect them in return. In loving Desdemona, who for different reasons shares his innocence, he implicitly claims an equality that his society cannot allow:

> Thus both lovers assert "humane" values

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against the conventions that debase them; but the "humaneness", so isolated, is itself an abstraction and reliance on it leaves them fatally vulnerable. The emotional innocence of the hero and heroine (like the extreme youth of Romeo and Juliet) reflects both their protest against the social environment and their ultimate helplessness before it.

Starting from this point Matthews succeeds, for the first time so far as I am concerned, in giving a satisfactory answer to the question which has always fascinated the critics, why does Iago hate Othello? His answer is, put very simply, "because he is a Moor". After showing how Brabantio's earlier friendship for Othello is transformed into hatred the moment he has to consider him as a son-in-law, Matthews continues:

> These early scenes demonstrate, therefore, that Iago's view of Othello is not—except in pathological intensity—a unique aberration, but an attitude held by the Venetian ruling class when forced into human relationship with a Moor. The Duke and the rest of his council who are conciliatory and tolerant cannot afford to be otherwise, "cannot with safety cast him": they need Othello's professional services.

Iago, of course, is not a member of the Venetian ruling class and his attitude is somewhat different from theirs. It is, essentially, the hatred of the frustrated poor white for the coloured man of ability whose talents have placed him in a position of "unnatural" superiority. "For Iago, Othello is not a human being at all, he is an animal." He shows this repeatedly in the language he uses to describe him, and he sets out quite deliberately to reduce him to the level of a beast.

In this he nearly succeeds, but not quite, and his failure, while it does not save Othello from destruction, gives the tragedy a conclusion that forbids despair:

> Othello's final speech, therefore, though it cannot mitigate what he has done, demonstrates the complete recovery of his integrity as a human being. He will not beg for mercy on the strength of his past greatness, but sums up himself and others with objective self-knowledge, and carries out his own sentence, offering himself by his last gesture as a sacrifice to his victim, since this is the only act of reunion open to him:
>
> I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee. No way but this—
> Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
>
> All that Iago's poison has achieved is an object that "poisons sight": a bed on which a black man and a white girl, although they are dead, are embracing. Human dignity, the play says, is indivisible.

Hamlet and Lear

In *From Hamlet to Lear* Arnold Kettle tackles the two plays which are perhaps the core of Shakespeare's work and in which he has grappled most seriously with the problems of his time. They are also the plays which have been most written about and least understood. *Hamlet* is not a play about a neurotic young man who cannot face the reality of action, nor is *Lear* a mere welter of horror and torment in a distant and barbarian past. Both are plays about people who are transformed by experience, who go into the depths and whose eyes are opened there to a totally new vision of the world. As Kettle says:

> The revolutionary nature of Hamlet's view of the world is that he sees tyranny and murder and inhumanity not as unfortunate abuses but as the norm and essence of the court of Denmark, not as blots on a society he can accept but as integral parts of a way of life he now finds intolerable.
>
> In other words, Hamlet can no longer base his values and actions on the accepted assumptions of the conventional sixteenth-century prince. He ceases to behave as a prince ought to behave and begins behaving as a man, a sixteenth-century man, imbued with the values and caught up in the developing and exciting potentialities of the new humanism. The words which Hamlet comes back to in his deepest moments of need and trouble are the words man and friend.
>
> "Mother, for love of Grace,
> Lay not that flattering unction to thy soul,
> That not your trespass but my madness speaks"

Hamlet says, and it is not his madness but the state of Denmark, the disjointed time, which is the subject of the play. His situation calls for action—but what effective action is possible, what action that will not reduce him to the level of his antagonists? Neither Hamlet nor Shakespeare have any real answer to this question, and the tragedy ends ambiguously:

> The fifth act does not involve, it seems to me, a dramatic resolution of Hamlet's dilemmas in any full sense of the word, but rather some kind of salvaging of human decency and a rejection of philosophic idealism. Hamlet, the prince who has tried to become a man, becomes a prince again and does what a sixteenth-century prince ought to do—killing the murderer of his father, forgiving the stupid, clean-limbed Laertes, expressing (for the first time) direct concern about his own claims to the throne but giving his dying voice to young Fortinbras. . . . The end then, is, in one sense, almost total defeat for everything Hamlet has stood for. But it is an acceptance of the need to act in the real world, and that is a great human triumph.

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In *Lear,* no less, we have a conflict which is stated rather than resolved. At the opening of the play a clear division can be seen into two camps or parties, very much as in the England of Shakespeare:

> On the one hand are those who accept the old order (Lear, Gloucester, Kent, Albany) which has to be seen as, broadly speaking, the feudal order; on the other hand are the new people, the individualists (Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Cornwall) who have the characteristic outlook of the bourgeoisie.

They are marked by a sharply opposed concept of nature. For the representatives of the old it is the traditional order of mutual obligation and degree which is natural. Edmund, quite early, speaks for the new when he says:

> Thou, Nature, art my Goddess; to thy law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom?

For him and his party the nature of man is the uninhibited pursuit of enlightened self-interest. Shakespeare clearly rejects this view with a deep loathing, as we can see not only in *Lear* but in play after play. But he cannot accept the traditionalist view either though he would seem to respect it. In Cordelia he embodies a third concept of nature, neither a formal and customary relation nor a state where all men are at war with all others, but one in which human relations are based on sincerity, affection and mutual respect.

As the play develops Lear is stripped of layer after layer of the attributes of his kingship, till, naked and alone, he, too comes to recognise the truth of Cordelia's belief.

> And in the course of discovering it Lear has become a hero. His story, put in its simplest terms, is the story of his progress from being a king to being a man, neither more nor less. It is a story so fearful and wonderful that all human society is shaken by the terrible beauty of it and at its supreme moments man and the universe are seen in relationships which it is scarcely possible for words other than Shakespeare's own to describe.

He discovers, too, his kinship with the outcast and wretched, he discovers the truth about society and the justice which is based on wealth and class power. In the world as it is such knowledge is redeeming, but also fatal. Lear cannot be restored to his kingdom—there is no return to the past. Both he and Cordelia must perish. Like *Hamlet, Lear* ends with an unanswered question. We do not know how far, if at all, Edgar, who succeeds him as king, shared his terrible vision on the wind-swept heath.

The Winter's Tale

Charles Barber discusses another of the long-standing Shakespearean problems in *The Winter's Tale and Jacobean Society,* the problem of how we are to estimate the plays which he wrote in his last years after his retirement to Stratford. Do they represent a retreat from reality, an admission that the questions with which he tormented himself in his tragic period were beyond him and had better be left alone, or are we to interpret them as offering a solution on some sort of plane? These plays tend to end with a reconciliation of some kind, but is it a true reconciliation or an evasion? Such questions are important, but not easily answerable, and, if I understand him, Charles Barber does not attempt a categoric answer.

> What Shakespeare has done (he writes) I think, is to put the tragic conflicts and disorders of his age into a wider historical perspective. In the great tragedies, the breakdown of order and the agonies arising from a change of custom and of world-view fill the picture. But in this play he has stepped further back, and these conflicts have become merely part of the picture, disturbances in the continuum of human history. . . .
>
> I suggest that the play is about the process of social change in seventeenth-century England: the division between court and country, the mastery of nature by the arts of man, the toughness of traditional rural life in the face of political change, the hope for a regenerated England through a reunion of court with cottage, the acceptance of the process of history. The weaknesses of the play are a result of what it leaves out. . . .
>
> Because of the simplification of the society depicted, and the omission of the actual social forces which were making for change in Shakespeare's day, the reunion of Court and Cottage becomes something merely wished for, an act of faith. Hence the supernatural operates in the play as a substitute for plausible natural causes.

The whole essay is an excellent example of that combination of close analysis with an absence of dogma so characteristic of this book.

Perplexing Questions

We are left with questions because Shakespeare's changing world faced *him* with questions which were new, terrible and perplexing. He lived in a society still feudal in its organisation but in which bourgeois relations were growing apace and all feudal values were under challenge. Hector and Hotspur were becoming as obsolete on the battlefield as Timon was in peaceful life. Their virtues no less than their failings doomed them to extinction, and the new men, the practical, the

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hard-headed, the thrusters and graspers, were succeeding through their vices no less than their virtues. The age was, perhaps, one of increasing prosperity in the sense that the total national wealth was growing, but this prosperity was certainly most unevenly distributed. The increasing wealth of some was the result of increased exploitation of many.

Many of the changes that were visible could only be distressing to anyone with a seeing eye or a social conscience, and we have every reason to conclude from his plays, especially those written in the early years of the seventeenth century, that Shakespeare found them distressing. In an age not yet revolutionary but approaching revolution it is the negative aspects of change, the dissolution of the old, often of the most attractive features of the old, which is most readily visible. Shakespeare was a poet of keen and penetrating insight, but he was not a prophet who could discover the change beyond the change. He must often have felt what Donne expresses in a poem quoted in this book by Kettle:

> 'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
> All just supply, and all Relation:
> Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
> For every man alone thinkes he hath got
> To be a Phoenix. . . .

Not many in this world could get to be a Phoenix—but many must have felt themselves alone in a quite new kind of way.

Nevertheless this was the age of the maturing bourgeois-democratic revolution, and there is much more in this revolution than the victory of a new set of exploiters. If the outlook and activities of the oncoming bourgeoisie had little in common with those of Shakespeare, his values have very much in common with those who stand out a generation or so later as the best representatives of the revolution, with Milton, or Walwyn or even Cromwell. In their sense of human worth and dignity, of the importance both of reason and compassion, in their confidence in the ability of man to overcome difficulties and master his destiny, even when the difficulties seemed for the time insuperable, they all carried forward the movement of thought which they took up from Shakespeare and the humanists of his time. It was largely because it had this tradition behind it that the English revolution was one of the great steps forward for humanity.

In one other respect, at least, Shakespeare was most fortunate in his age. He began to write at a time when the English language was taking definite shape yet was still fresh and flexible, a superb poetic instrument. And he entered the theatre when it was most apt to receive and develop a master. By 1590 the theatre in London was technically mature enough to give Shakespeare the medium he needed, yet not so rigidly formed that it could not be adapted to any purpose he might wish to put it to. Nor is the technical side the only or even the most important one. The social development was such that it had absorbed and combined all sorts of trends and qualities that transcended class boundaries and made it the natural vehicle for the expression of a new sense of national unity. This also was short-lived, and Shakespeare's career coincided with it almost exactly. As Robert Weimann says:

> It was in truth a theatre "individable" with a poetry "unlimited" in its social and aesthetic appeal; for it embraced many of the popular, humanist and some of the courtly elements, together with their theatrical equivalents such as allegory, singing, dancing, clowning, dumb-shows and disguisings, and corresponding modes of speech, presentation and acting. But by fusing these elements in the light of a unifying and exalting experience of nationhood, the Elizabethan theatre brought forth something new which *nevertheless* appealed to all sections of its audience. . . .

A New Approach

I have been able to touch on only a few of the themes and mention only a few of the riches to be found in *Shakespeare in a Changing World*. There are other chapters that the reader will find no less rewarding than those I have referred to. Naturally, everyone will find some more to his liking than others, and I do not wish to prejudice judgement by expressing preferences of my own.

And apart from each individual contribution the book has a unity and life of its own which comes, I think, not from any shared dogma but from a common sense that in our age, standing as the age of Shakespeare did upon the verge of immense and still only partly foreseeable change, we have a kinship which puts us in a peculiarly favourable position to appreciate the nature of his contribution to our national life and culture. More than any generation in these four hundred years we are conscious of standing at one of the great crossroads of time. In view of Kettle's qualification which I quoted earlier it would no doubt be too much to say that this book shows as never before the value of approaching Shakespeare from the standpoint of Marxism: perhaps it would not be impermissible to say that it shows the immense advantage that is gained by scrutinising his humanism from the standpoint of the most advanced humanism of our own day, which I hope no one will object to my calling Socialist Humanism.

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Discussion Contributions on

What Does Music Express?

A Reply to the Discussion

Alan Bush

MY article *What Does Music Express?* in the July 1963 issue of *Marxism Today* has aroused a welcome number of discussion contributions. All contributors agree that the content of music is human feeling; none suggests any theory as to how this is possible other than that propounded in my article, namely, that musical art exists because human beings have voices and ears. (Comrade Jane Corbett states correctly that "music has many facets; it can portray sorrow, joy, compassion and other shades of common emotion. In addition it may have a utility value to support dancing or take the form of patterns of organised sound, such as the Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues of J. S. Bach." It is, however, a misconception to suppose that these various types of music differ in that some have content, the expression of human feelings, and others do not. Each one of the Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues has as its content a particular shade of generalised emotion, ranging from grave to gay; whether a piece of music is in fugue, dance or any other form is quite irrelevant to the question of whether it has a content of feeling or not.)

Some Questions Answered

Exception was taken by Comrades Corbett and Short to my criticism of Schoenberg's statement that

> "Music speaks in its own language of purely musical matters—or perhaps as most aestheticians believe, of matters of feeling and fantasy."

Michael Short states that "one can have specifically musical emotions". This is a proposition of psychological theory; there has been so far too little research to permit belief in such a proposition; moreover, the aesthetic emotion is a postulate of bourgeois formalist theoreticians of art, such as Roger Fry, who are intent to support the theory that it is the form of the work of art which is all-important in its appreciation by and effect on the consumer, the content being totally irrelevant. Jane Corbett considers Schoenberg's speculative proposition a reasonable statement; she provides, however, no reason for it.

Serious confusions in the contributions concern what is called "the meaning of music". In the strict sense of the term music has no meaning. Its content is not conceptual. Music cannot state that the earth goes round the sun, or that socialism is an advance on capitalism. (Of course I am speaking here of instrumental music; a piece of vocal music with an appropriate text could heighten the effect of it by expressing wonder at the marvels of the natural world, and in the second case, joy at the achievement of socialism or rage at those who try to frustrate its realisation.) Michael Short refers to "meaning by association" and "meaning by information"; but he is speaking of extra-musical connections which a musical work may possess. These are, however, not synonymous with the content of the music, which is the feeling expressed within the framework of the extra-musical connection. (Thus a hymn tune may express joy or a humble desire for the forgiveness of sins; Wagner's "spear" and "magic helmet" motifs in "The Ring" express the sense of strength which possession of an invincible weapon confers on its owner and the feeling of awe at the mysterious power of transformation conferred by the magic helmet.)

Content and Meaning

A more serious confusion entered the discussion with the proposition by Comrade Russell that "the meaning of music appears to depend upon a conjunction of composer, listener, time and place of performance". As I said above, a piece of music has no meaning, *though it has a content.* But every performance of a piece of music has a meaning for each separate listener. (As a concrete example, I could cite the meaning which a performance of the Tannhäuser overture had for me when I heard it for the first time at the age of fourteen, and which aroused in me the ambition to become a composer. A performance of the same work today does not, of course, have the

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same meaning for me, though I may now be able to appreciate its content to a far fuller extent.)

It is a fundamental error to equate the subjective meaning of a piece of music for any particular listener at any particular time or place with the objective content of the music; the latter is the emotional experience which inspired the composer, the former is an interplay between the objective content and the aural, mental and emotional capacity of the listener, at the moment of performance, to apprehend the content. In a hypothetical case, where a listener possesses an emotional capacity the equal of Beethoven's and a full historical knowledge and understanding of what the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity meant to that composer, the meaning for him of a Beethoven symphony and its content would coincide; in the ordinary way a listener, if he can "respond naturally to music with his feelings", to quote from Deryck Cooke, does apprehend something of a great work's content, even if very little, so long as he does not use the music as a narcotic which will waft him into the world of his private wishes and imaginings. There is thus nothing strange in the fact that the performances of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven served contradictory ends in London and Berlin during the Second World War.

National Characteristics

An all-important proposition in my article which aroused fierce opposition from Comrades Corbett, Diamant, Russell and Short was the following:

> "Marxism teaches that man's consciousness is socially determined. It follows from this that as human society is at present constituted, and groups of human beings, of which the composer is one, are still organised in national groupings with their own culture, ways of expression, characteristic gestures and above all, their own language, music, if it is to be musical art in the true sense of the word, *must have national characteristics*."

Marxist theory of art does not speculate on what may happen in 500 years; it is a guide to action now. Musical art is based upon singing. Singing means one language or another. To quote again from my original article:

> "People of different nationalities express themselves differently in their gestures, in the speed and inflection of their speech. Thus for a composer truthfully to express himself in music, his feelings will be associated and moulded by the particular social consciousness which has been developed in him in childhood, and by his education and traditional cultural influences."

In this connection Comrade Russell argues that in England "what we heard was in the main a German language, imported during the nineteenth and earlier centuries, copied slavishly by our composers of the period and imbibed by all those of my generation as if it were the normal language. It would be mechanical for anyone so educated to adopt artificially a so-called English musical language." With the facts that Comrade Russell states I entirely agree. But I disagree that this situation should be considered as an ideally correct one. Marxism implies struggle against capitalist conditions; I cannot see that resistance to the conditions that capitalism has created in the British musical world should be regarded as "mechanical". I would, on the contrary, apply this word to their passive acceptance as something normal and correct. I mentioned the development of English, Scottish and Welsh schools of music, something which seems to have aroused ridicule; it may interest readers to know that a leading Welsh composer, Dr. Daniel Jones, not as far as I am aware a Marxist, expressed himself recently as follows:

> "National characteristics are an inevitable part of genuine music. Russian and Czech writers have noticed the difference between my work and that of English composers. The writing of Welsh music is not a matter of using folk tunes; when I attempt to define the special character of Welsh music, I think of Bardic poetry—an intense complexity of structure, coupled with an entirely illusory sense of rhapsodising, in which everything is intricately related—and of a lyricism which one could compare with the painting of Ceri Richards."
>
> (*The Times*, 30.11.63)

Evidently Daniel Jones does not regard the development of a Welsh school as a "backward step" or "retrograde", in which terms the development of national characteristics in music were designated by Comrades Corbett and Short. These objections were in my opinion effectively answered in Comrade Jack Dunman's contribution, where he pointed out the dialectical relations of nationalism and internationalism, as opposed to cosmopolitanism. Apart from this, it appears to me that comrades who raise such objections would need to apply the same terms to European writers who still choose to write in their own languages rather than in Esperanto, which is no more difficult to learn as a literary technique than serial dodecaphony as a musical one. Comrade Russell described my arguments for national characteristics as "far-fetched". I believe them to have been closely argued. I would like to point out that this theory finds support in such non-Marxist and

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Marxist writers as the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi, and the Hungarian aesthetician Georg Lukacs. I must disclaim any originality for the theory, which is widely held by Marxist musicologists in Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

L. Diamant's Points

Comrade Diamant writes that "the moment we apply historical materialist method to music or to any art we have found the key to its meaning and to the understanding of it". I applaud this expression of belief whole-heartedly; I only wonder how long "the moment" may last, my expectation is many decades. Furthermore, Comrade Diamant raises more problems than he solves when he writes "*if a composer shows sincerity, integrity* and conviction, the meaning of his music should then be clear—irrelevant whether such music is modal, tonal, polytonal or dodecaphonic—*provided that it is in the idiom of its period.*" Sincerity in a creative artist does not ensure success, though without it he can achieve nothing. In my understanding of Marxist method applied to music, it is certainly not irrelevant whether such music is modal, tonal, polytonal or dodecaphonic. And I am totally at a loss to know what Comrade Diamant means by "the idiom of its period". When one considers that Elgar's First Symphony in A flat and Schoenberg's atonal and non-thematic Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, were both composed in the year 1908 I do not know which, if either of them, is "in the idiom of its period", while allowing sincerity to both.

Earliest Music

In conclusion there is one correction which I would like to make to my original article. I wrote that "the primitive work-song is no doubt the first music which man created". This was, I regret to say, wishful Marxist thinking. It has been pointed out to me that more than twenty years ago it was established by Erich von Hornbostel that such primitive work songs, while among the earliest musical forms which man created, were preceded *by totemistic dance-songs, sung by tribes of* nomadic food-gatherers, who had not reached the stage of hunting, agriculture or any form of communal labour, such as building, whether of dwellings or merely of palisades as a protection against wild animals. Ernst Fischer, in his book *The Necessity of Art,* has defined art as work; but this refers to individually created art and not to the primitive folk rituals developed in tribal society. The earliest music was indeed vocal and socially necessary, but it was concerned with magic rituals and not with the labour process, as I erroneously stated.

What is Television?

David Mercer

DEREK HILL pointed out some time ago in *Contrast* (Winter 1962) that television authorities throughout the world are of two kinds: businessmen use TV to make money and establishments use it to maintain their existing power. He went on to say:

> "Here, commercial competition has distracted the B.B.C. from its original paternalistic preservation of the *status quo;* and its policy of giving audiences what it felt was good for them is now schizophrenically confused with an anxiety to simultaneously provide enough of what they seem to want. But neither kind of authority is really rich enough to exercise altruism. They can only afford to hire it."

Hiring Talent

The circumstances in which talent, creative or administrative, is hired, are very different from those in the cinema and the theatre. A stage play must be hawked around until it is accepted by a management. The management then finds director, actors and theatre. The resulting production is unique in the sense that it exists through a temporary alliance of people and resources which are dispersed once it is over. A similar process of organisation takes place in the cinema, though the financing is infinitely more complex, and screenplays tend to be commissioned.

Television programme companies, however, are in permanent existence. Each one is a concentration of technical resources, financing, and personnel. They acquire their own "styles". They institutionalise themselves. Here is no temporary alliance but a number of large, complex entities which take their character from the forces which brought them into

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existence, and to which they are obligated for their survival.

The writer dealing with Wardour Street or Shaftesbury Avenue can at least know his enemies—vulgarity, cynicism, ruthlessness in financial control etc. In TV, however, there is between the studio floor and the remote centre of power a bewildering hierarchy in which any coherent sense of direction tends to get lost, and in which the arbitrariness of power is to some extent obscured. At the B.B.C. (at least during the period December 1961 - March 1963, when I had five plays produced there) this situation can favour the writer's interests. Within it there can be a great deal of freedom, both negative and positive. Negative as when, for example, the executive fails to register the fact that a director is quietly producing something anarchistic or subversive. Positive when, and it happens surprisingly often, a group producer or higher executive digs his heels in and says it is time TV drama grew up. There is no want of progressive attitudes in individuals at the B.B.C.—but theirs is an endless struggle with decaying traditions and attitudes, departmental complexities, and policies from on high. They are people with courage and integrity, plus a sturdy digestion for absorbing rockets. The B.B.C. is not responsible to any outside censoring authority either, which gives individuals greater scope for asserting their values when they might otherwise be worrying about keeping their jobs. On the very rare occasions when I have been asked to reconsider a line of dialogue at the B.B.C., there was usually a convincing, if irritating, case for doing so.

"Aunty" and "Big Brother"

My experience (much more limited) with I.T.V. is less reassuring. Again there is no lack of people with the highest artistic standards and critical intelligence. Their problem is to function usefully and keep their self-respect at the same time. This is not an exaggeration. The jargon of script departments gives some idea: "up-beat ending"; "you've got to grab them by the balls in the first five seconds"; "the viewers (or I.T.A., or Head of Drama, etc.) won't wear it"; "of course I don't want to inhibit writers, but couldn't you . . .?" and so on. This kind of remark is not peculiar to I.T.V. of course, and the tone is often ironic or mocking—but there is *acceptance* of the limits deriving inevitably from the nature of I.T.V., and recognition that one either does accept or get out. If "Aunty" fitfully survives at the B.B.C., Big Brother never sleeps over at the Opposition. Language censorship too is implacable, and usually childish. Under the pretence of appeasing the viewers, standards of "morality" are imposed which in fact only reflect the reaction, sterile puritanism and moribundity of the controllers. These seem to live in a world where the roughness and vigour of English as people actually speak it, is an offence; where sexual organs do not exist; where "god" is an unimpeachable concept; where death, violence and struggle are abhorred unless conveniently mythified in Westerns or who-dunnits.

Wherever such cretinism occurs in drama departments, the scapegoat is usually the audience. This is logical. If a society is rotten, and perpetuates both itself and its rottenness with such remarkable dexterity as ours does, then the diet of the "masses" must be rationalised consistently with the supposition that they are the very fools and idiots it tries to make of them. If the working class has been bought off from the ideals of the labour movement, and left to thrash about in the reactionary anarchy of conservative affluence, there arises a situation highly favourable to the forces of reaction. It is a kind of historical tautology. By this I mean that the image assiduously projected by conservatism of an affluent working class, seems borne out by the historical facts. It *is* borne out by many of the historical facts, but not in the sense that that is what it means to be working class. The conservatives have pulled the affluent worker out of a hat; their problem is to keep him hopping in and out of it at their own convenience.

Paternalism and the Audience

The problem of his appetites in the matter of art and entertainment is more amenable to oversimplification. The dilemmas of TV programme companies are more protested than felt. Despite lip-service paid to notions of human variety, individuality and native intelligence, everyone knows that the bulk of a TV audience is by any reasonable standards ill-educated and ill-informed. The reasons why this is so are also known, but people working in TV can hardly be expected to accept responsibility for it, and reassure themselves that what they are confronted by is a *fait accompli*. With some very honourable exceptions, the programmes are then designed not for a fictitious stereotype, not for actual human beings sitting in rooms—but in order to validate, as it were, the assumptions of the designers.

It is time the fallacy of "paternalism" was exploded once and for all. Do the users of the term mean that to confront people with what one knows is good must inevitably be an arrogant presumption? How should we proceed? Perhaps democratically, by defining good as what is wanted by the majority—then carrying out the appropriate investigations, and dishing it out on the basis of the results. Perhaps. We shall then be led back to the assumptions of the designers, since the majority of choices will

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surely embody the values most widely propagated and consumed.

Unless society itself undergoes rapid and drastic changes, leading to higher education, complexity of experience, and active debate and participation in the running of their lives by very large numbers of people, their "choices" will confirm the status quo. And in the absence of some such revolution, not only in the present but for the foreseeable future, television will only be saved from its own clichés by the responsible stubbornness of individuals whose artistic and political convictions are mature enough not only to resist, but oppose the idea that "what the audience wants" is a monster demanding endless placation. If it is paternalistic to say that *because* certain programmes are moronic, vacuuous, patronising or trivial they should come off the air—what on earth would be unpaternalistic? To continue to justify them, when those who do so are cynical of their own justifications? The sneer "paternalism" is really the cultural equivalent of attacks on "interference" in the spheres of economic and social planning. Nothing arouses people's fears and anxieties more than the suggestion that they are being controlled, manipulated, made dependent on the decisions of others. And once a connection is established between these things and the older anxieties of the parent/child relationship, the resistance created can be subtly exploited.

Bert Baker, having considered the conclusion that ". . . all our television programmes are trivial, detached from life and reality, and that this situation is accepted by dull-witted viewers generally and exploited for profit by commercial television in particular", rightly sees hope in the emergence of ". . . a growing amount of positive, progressive, socially-conscious work appearing on our television screens."

TV Drama

This does not mean, however, that the audience has changed—or that the policies of the TV companies in general have changed. If TV improved after 1956 (I am thinking especially of TV drama) it was largely because of what was happening in the theatre and the cinema. It was inevitable that post-Osbornian drama and films would find some equivalent in TV. The "new-wave" in TV drama was entitled to an *entrée* on its merits—but its real credentials were in fact the general recognition that what had happened in the other media was a fundamental change in the direction of English drama. This in turn was linked to an awakening social awareness in the nineteen-fifties, a mood of protest, criticism and indignation—to C.N.D., the Committee of 100, the widespread youthful disgust with conventional politics, to a realisation that the core of the affluent apple is wormy.

In the act of trailing after the theatre and films, TV drama discovered that it might have possibilities of its own. We are still very much at the beginning.

Introducing the discussion in Edinburgh on the set topic, "The theatre and its rivals, cinema and TV", Mr. Martin Esslin somehow forgot about TV drama altogether. Subsequently Mr. Ned Sherrin announced that TV drama is for ". . . the barely competent and the second rate." Sherrin was at least provocative. Esslin's lapse of memory a gloomy reminder that drama on The Box is a second class citizen.

Possibilities and Problems

By the time a TV play is reviewed it is over and done with. Very often the tape on which it was recorded, representing an outlay of thousands of pounds' worth of concentrated labour, has been wiped. The critics' opinons are somewhat irrelevant when most people who saw the play have made up their own minds, and the event attracts little further public interest—if any. And if a TV writer shocks or antagonises, or if his work is otherwise so powerful that it compels notice, it none the less soon passes into a limbo unfamiliar to those who write successfully for the theatre or films. Television plays do not become "public property" in the same sense as stage or screenplays. In this absence of a dialogue between play, critics and public, TV drama is rightly termed ephemeral—irrespective of whether particular plays are as good as anything that can be seen in other media.

To abandon TV drama for this reason would be an act of self-interest. To reject a possible audience of millions (a TV play can reach more people in

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one transmission than a stage play running to packed houses for years) would be perversely defeatist. It isn't a question of "I can either write plays for me or plays for 'them'." Why shouldn't a TV audience be exposed to the best of every kind of drama that is being written? A great variety of work by classical and established contemporary writers for the stage has already been shown—but these are prestige projects. If the audience reaction to them is daunting, the TV nabobs write it off as their contribution to culture. They are more cagey when it is a matter of giving a contemporary *television* dramatist his head—but a few writers are now in a position to exact respect, and to stand by their unexpurgated manuscripts, if not to dictate their own terms. In alliance with those directors, producers and others who believe in them, they can take TV drama in directions where "the system" may not want to go.

Whatever these directions are will provide the answer to whether TV drama is an art in its own right. It is a developing language, and has not yet evolved the criteria by which it can be usefully judged. I can easily imagine, and indeed am trying to write, plays which it would be difficult to conceive in any terms other than those of TV. Television lacks some of the technical freedom of films, and the ritualistic authority of the stage. It has though a curious intensity, a psychological force which seems to me peculiar to itself. It will tolerate more words than film; and though this may be a dubious virtue, properly used it can make feasible a poetry of language and pictures which is highly distinctive. Above all it cuts across the cultural habits of classes. I have never seen a busload of miners at the Royal Court, but drama as the sophisticated prerogative of the middle class has no meaning in terms of television waves—and if the miners, or whoever else, switch off, their choices reveal them as products of the kind of society they live in, and anyone who despises those choices should be demanding a different kind of society.

Problems of Imperialism

Hugo Rathbone

I AM very sorry to see that James Harvey in the February issue of *Marxism Today* has got himself entangled by the immensely complicated, and to a quite considerable extent pretentious, web of statistics that Barratt Brown has spun around his notions. I cannot call them theories as I agree with J. R. Campbell that they really have but little logic in them. Besides agreeing to all that J. R. Campbell has to say, I would, however, like to show readers how this web of statistics, if based on wrong premises, results in a web of distortions, as instanced by B.B.'s efforts to show how wrong Lenin was after all. And it is these distortions that *Marxism Today* should not allow to become current in its pages.

Distorting Statistics

For the B.B. "statistics", quoted by Harvey in the last but one paragraph of his communication in the February issue, suggest that not only has tribute from imperialist exploitation been steadily declining since 1913, but that then, and more so today, it was and is a relatively insignificant item in the total bill of exploitation imposed by British capitalism both at home and abroad. Both these contentions are against all working class experience and analysis of history.

Of course B.B., may refer, for instance, to his sentence quoted by Campbell on page 60 that the income from overseas investments in 1913 was perhaps a quarter of all property income in the U.K. I do not know what was the basis or in what relation this statement was made, but it certainly had nothing to do with the table from which Harvey quoted for subsequent years.

Perhaps the author, whom B.B. says was connected with the League of Nations, has based it on British Government statistics. In any case Mr. Barratt Brown's subsequent manipulation of his Table IV figures, taken up, as I said above, by Harvey, has revealed B.B. really as but one of those famous "statistical" distorters. Indeed what possible truthful result can one get from taking a percentage of a figure of purely company investment income on a total figure of all income both company and private. This is what B.B. has done, as far as one can check from the National Income and Expenditure Blue Book figures themselves. If one wants to know how large is the share of profits

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"earned" abroad as compared with the total of all profits in both the U.K. and from abroad, and how these profits from abroad are decreasing or increasing both relatively and absolutely, the only kind of table one can construct on the basis of official figures would be on these lines:

Year	*Col. 1 Gross Trading Profits of companies and corporations' surpluses trading in U.K.*	*Col. 2 Income earned abroad*	*Col. 3 Total of gross profits earned in U.K. and abroad*	*Percentage of Col. 2 on Col. 3*
		Millions of £'s		%
1938	700	158	858	18·4
1946	1,496	275	1,771	15·5
1950	2,322	688	3,010	22·8
1953	2,313	696	3,009	23·1
1958	3,017	1,004	4,021	25·0
1959	3,321	1,035	4,356	23·8
1961	3,536	953	4,489	21·2
1962	3,531	1,072	4,603	23·3

These figures are taken from the National Income and Expenditure Blue Book for 1963 (dated August 1963).

They have had to be constructed from two tables. Those for the years 1938-50 inclusive, included public corporation surpluses as well as companies' profits. The figures for later years are just for companies' profits, as these profits by themselves are only given, in this issue anyway, for the last ten years.[1] The profits of Co-operatives are included in both cases as seemingly the Blue Book does not separate them. Likewise both the U.K. profits and those from abroad are "gross", i.e. they are given before taxation has been deducted whether payable to U.K. or to overseas governments. Also they both do not include non-trading income, defined as income from holdings in Government securities, rents, etc.

No Decline of Tribute

First it is clear from the fourth column in this table that the importance of foreign tribute in the total of capitalist tribute has always been ever so much larger than B.B. would seemingly want to show; further that there is no obvious trend showing any decline in this tribute although, like the rest of the economy, it has only been jogging along in recent years.

Thirdly, of course, these figures are only what the Government are willing to admit to. As I have shown elsewhere, the figure of tribute earned abroad, which here is based on the Balance of Payments figures, represents only part of the exploitation of overseas countries by British capitalism.

To these figures should be added first all profits from the overseas transactions of U.K. oil companies, insurance, films, royalties, commissions, banking and other services included in the Balance of Payments figures as "Other Services", amounting in 1962 to £215 millions: and secondly the City's net overseas earnings from banking, brokerage, merchanting, loans, commissions, foreign exchange dealings, etc., reckoned in 1957 as reaching £150 millions a year.

Super Profits

On top of all this there is the total of super profits that British imperialists have always wrenched from those directly or indirectly subjected to them, particularly through direct trading—selling their manufactured products dearly and buying the subjected people's raw materials cheaply. Finally there is that other kind of super profit based on the fact of a country with a very advanced technological basis forcing an exchange of its products with a country with an economy on a relatively much lower basis.

For these reasons I consider that the tribute from abroad should be not the £1,072 millions for 1962 as now admitted to by the Government, but at least a total of £1,500 millions a year. This makes the percentage of tribute from abroad equal to about a third of the total bill of British capitalist exploitation. Let Mr. Barratt Brown return to his cubby hole and think again before he propounds another "After Imperialism" affair.

[1] At any rate for the earlier years, 1938-50, the inclusion of corporation surpluses does not make a great deal of difference in the total of "income earned abroad". For in 1952 when figures both with and without corporation surpluses are available, the income earned abroad when these corporation surpluses are included, was only £1 million more i.e. £739 million as against £738 million when only companies profits are dealt with.

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